NATION

LS polls: In phase 5, only 12% in fray are women

≫ Page: 4 ≪

BUSINESS

China largest trading partner of India with $118 B

≫ Page: 7 ≪

SPORTS

Simarjeet, Gaikwad shine as CSK beat RR

≫ Page: 8 ≪

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SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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4th phase: 96 seats across 10 states/UT in the fray

AMRAVATI/LUCKNOW, 12 MAY

The electoral fate of several prominent candidates like Samajwadi Party Chief Akhilesh Yadav, Union minister Giriraj Singh, TMC's firebrand leader Mohua Moitra and AIMIM's Asaduddin Owaisi will be decided on Monday when polling will be held in 96 Lok Sabha constituencies across 10 states and Union Territories in the fourth phase of the general elections.

Voting will simultaneously be held in all 175 Assembly seats in Andhra Pradesh, which is witnessing a triangular contest involving ruling YSRC, Congress-led INDIA bloc and the NDA, comprising the BJP, Chandrababu Naidu-led TDP and Pawan Kalyan-led Jana Sena Party (JSP).

As many as 28 legislative assembly seats of Odisha are also going to polls in this phase. A total of 1,717 candidates are in the fray in the Lok Sabha seats and more than 19 lakh polling officials have been deployed at 1.92 lakh polling stations for the over 17.70 crore eligible voters, including 8.73 women, in this round of the seven-phase polls.

PHOTO: PTI

Among the keenly watched contests are those involving former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Akhilesh Yadav (Kannauj, UP) and Union ministers Giriraj Singh (Begusarai, Bihar), Nityanand Rai (Ujiarpur, Bihar) and Raosaheb Danve (Jalna, Maharashtra).

Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury and former cricketer Yusuf Pathan of TMC (both from Baharampur, WB), BJP's Pankaja Munde (Beed, Maharashtra), AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi (Hyderabad, Telangana) and Andhra Pradesh Congress president YS Sharmila (Kadapa) are among the prominent candidates.

Film star-turned-politician Shatrughan Sinha is seeking re-election from Asansol where he is pitted against BJP's veteran leader S S Ahluwalia. BJP's former West Bengal president Dilip Ghosh and Trinamool Congress' Kirti Azad are contesting from Bardhaman-Durgapur.

Polling will be held today in all 17 Lok Sabha seats in Telangana, all 25 seats in Andhra Pradesh, 13 in Uttar Pradesh, five in Bihar, four in Jharkhand, eight in Madhya Pradesh, 11 in Maharashtra, four in Odisha, eight in West Bengal and one in Jammu and Kashmir. The weather forecast indicates that the parliamentary constituencies going to polls are likely to experience normal to below normal temperatures and there will be no heatwave-like conditions in these areas on polling day. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 2&4

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BENGALURU'S FORECAST

Yesterdays
Min temp: 24°C
Max temp: 33°C

Todays
Min temp: 24°C
Max temp: 32°C

TMC scaring women in Sandeshkhali: PM

TMC trying to protect culprits, says PM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi being felicitated during a public meeting for Lok Sabha elections, in Howrah on Sunday PHOTO: PTI

BARRACKPORE, 12 MAY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday slammed the "vote bank" politics of the Trinamool Congress (TMC) and alleged that the party's goons are threatening the tormented women of Sandeshkhali, where allegations of sexual abuse against TMC leaders have surfaced, to protect the culprits.

While addressing an election rally at Barrackpore in North 24 Parganas district, Modi alleged that under the TMC rule, Hindus have turned into second-class citizens in the state and asserted that "as long as Modi is there, no one can repeal the CAA law."

"All of us have seen what the TMC has done with the sisters and mothers of Sandeshkhali. TMC goons are now threatening the women in Sandeshkhali as the name of the main culprit is Shahjahan Sheikh. TMC is doing everything to protect the culprits of Sandeshkhali," he said. His remarks come in the backdrop of multiple purported videos surfacing on social media, which claimed that a local BJP party leader made several women of Sandeshkhali sign on blank papers which were later filled up as complaints of sexual assault against TMC leaders. Claiming that under the TMC regime, Bengal has turned into a centre of corruption and a "cottage industry of bomb-making", Modi said. "TMC has surrendered before vote bank politics in Bengal, where you cannot take the name of Shri Ram and neither can celebrate Ram Navami," he said. —*PTI.* ***>>>More on Page 4***

TMC man attacked in Sandeshkhali

Kolkata, 12 May
Tension erupted at Sandeshkhali on Sunday when BJP supporters allegedly attacked TMC worker during a protest. Tatan Gayen, an aide of Trinamool MLA Sukumar Mahto, was attacked at a stone's throw from police station. BJP took out a protest accusing TMC of false claim against them. —*Agencies*

PHOTO: PTI

Cop killed, over 100 injured in PoK protest

ISLAMABAD, 12 MAY

One police officer was killed and more than 100 people, mostly policemen, injured in violent clashes between security forces and protesters agitating against high prices of wheat flour and electricity in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, media reports said on Sunday. The disputed region witnessed clashes on Saturday between the police and activists of a rights movement amid a wheel-jam and shutter-down strike across the territory, the Dawn newspaper reported. Mirpur Sr Superintendent of Police Kamran Ali told that sub-inspector Adnan Qureshi succumbed to a gunshot wound in the chest in Islamgarh, where he was deployed along with other police personnel to stop a rally for Muzaffarabad via Kotli and Poonch under the banner of the Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC). JAAC has been seeking the provision of electricity as per hydropower generation cost in the region. —*PTI*

More on Page 6>>>

Mamata Banerjee PHOTO: PTI

Guv molestation row: Didi seeks Modi's response

AMDANGA, 12 MAY

Claiming that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was continuing to "peddle lies" about Sandeshkhali, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday questioned why he was maintaining a stoic silence on the allegations of molestation against Governor CV Ananda Bose and not asking him to resign.

Addressing an election rally in North 24 Parganas' Amdanga, which is a part of the Barrackpore Lok Sabha constituency; she said Modi should be ashamed that "BJP's conspiracy" about Sandeshkhali has become public. Banerjee said the Centre's inaction against the governor, who is accused of molestation by a Raj Bhavan staffer, showed the BJP's "true anti-woman character".

"Why did the Modi not ask the governor to resign during his overnight stay at Raj Bhavan?" she said.

Modi arrived in Kolkata on Saturday and stayed the night at Raj Bhavan, before beginning his whirlwind campaign in the state where he addressed four rallies. She said that as the Centre was holding back MGNREGA funds, 69 lakh poor people could not be paid. —*PTI*

Kejri: BJP planned to topple AAP

Kejriwal called SC verdict a 'miracle'

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann with Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, in New Delhi, on Sunday PHOTO: PTI

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal alleged on Sunday that BJP's plan was to topple Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) governments in the national capital and Punjab after his arrest in a money-laundering case, but it did not work out and the party became stronger in his absence.

AAP became more united "after my arrest", Kejriwal said while addressing the party MLAs following a meeting at the chief minister's residence here. This was Kejriwal's first meeting with the party MLAs after being released on interim bail on Friday. He was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in the money-laundering case linked to the alleged Delhi liquor scam.

The MLAs informed Kejriwal about the developments in the last month and a half. Chief Minister's wife Sunita Kejriwal, AAP national general secretary (organisation) Sandeep Pathak, MP Sanjay Singh, ministers Gopal Rai, Saurabh Bharadwaj, Atishi, Kailash Gahlot, its Lok Sabha poll candidates in Delhi and all the MLAs were present.

Addressing his party colleagues, Kejriwal said the Supreme Court granting interim bail to him till 1 June "was no less than a miracle". Kejriwal recalled that during his meetings with Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, Bharadwaj and Atishi in Tihar Jail, he would inquire whether the entire system in Delhi is working or not. —*PTI*

Kejri's 10 promises

- 24-Hour electricity supply
- Improve government schools
- Establishing Mohalla clinics in every locality
- Full autonomy to army to "reclaim land from China"
- Discontinue Agniveer
- Give fair compensation to farmers based on Swaminathan report
- Full statehood to Delhi
- INDIA bloc will generate 2 crore jobs annually
- Combat corruption by dismantling "BJP's protectionist measures"
- Simplify GST by removing it from PMLA regulations

> **I feel that god is trying to get us to do something. Whatever is happening, we are just instruments, god is doing everything**
>
> -Arvind Kejriwal, Delhi Chief Minister

Our workers are arrested ahead of polling, claims NC

SRINAGAR, 12 MAY

National Conference candidate for the Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency Aga Ruhullah Mehdi on Sunday demanded immediate release of workers of his party and rival PDP who he claimed have been arrested ahead of the polling. Voting in Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency is scheduled on Monday.

"Our workers are being picked up by the police since yesterday. I got a call from a senior colleague like AR Rather sb informing me about the arrests of our workers from Chrarsharif. Similar calls from colleagues from Khansahab Chadoora. Would the @ECISVEEP please care to explain these arrests," Mehdi, posted. PDP leader Firdous Tak also took to social media, calling for an end to the alleged arrests and harassment of his party workers. —*PTI*

8 Delhi hospitals, IGI Airport get bomb threats

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

Delhi Fire Services on Sunday said eight city hospitals and IGI Airport received bomb threats through emails, 11 days after over 150 schools in Delhi-NCR received a bomb scare of unprecedented scale.

The bomb threats were reported from Indira Gandhi International Airport Terminal-3, Burari Hospital, Sanjay Gandhi Hospital, Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital, Bara Hindu Rao Hospital, Janakpuri Super Speciality Hospital, Deen Dayal Upadhyay and Dabri's Dada Dev Hospital, a senior official of the Delhi Fire Services (DFS) said.

Security has been beefed up in all the hospitals in the city and additional police force deployment was made at the airport, however, nothing suspicious was so far recovered from any of the locations so far. —*PTI*

HASSAN SEX ABUSE

2 held over circulation of sex videos allegedly involving Prajwal

BENGALURU, 12 MAY

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) sleuths probing sexual abuse charges against Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna on Sunday arrested two people in connection with the leak and circulation of explicit videos, official sources said.

Two people-- Chetan and Likith Gowda -- were arrested in Hassan, and they are reportedly associated with BJP in the district, they said. Officials recorded their statements and the spot 'mahazar' was done at their residences in Yelagunda and Shravanabelagola respectively. Pen-drives containing the alleged explicit videos involving Prajwal, who was also BJP-JD(S) joint candidate from Hassan, were circulated in the district, a few days ahead of the first phase of Lok Sabha polls in the state on 26 April. Hassan went to the polls in the first phase.

Following this, the JD(S) poll agent Poornachandra Tejaswi had lodged a complaint with the cybercrime police, sources said.

Prajwal Revanna PHOTO: PTI

Prajwal, who is grandson of JD(S) patriarch and former prime minister HD Deve Gowda, is facing charges of sexually abusing women. The scandal has raised a political storm with the ruling Congress and BJP-JD(S) engaged in a slugfest.

While Congress government has formed a SIT to probe the cases, BJP and JD(S) -- NDA partners -- have demanded that it be handed over to the CBI, and action against those behind the circulation of explicit videos. BJP and JD(S) leaders have alleged the role of Congress leaders behind the circulation of explicit videos. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

'NO FREE MOVEMENT'

Kharge's chopper checked in Bihar, Oppn blames EC

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

Chief spokesperson of Congress Bihar unit, Rajesh Rathorre alleged on Sunday that Election Commission officials were 'targeting' Opposition leaders, while leaders of the BJP-led NDA were permitted to move about "freely" following Party chief Mallikarjun Kharge's helicopter inspection in Bihar's Samastipur.

He accused Election Commission officials checked Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge's helicopter.

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge PHOTO: PTI

Taking to his social media handle, Rajesh Rathorre said, "It is unfortunate that the helicopter of Rahul Gandhi in Kerala and now that of INC India President Shri@khargeji in Bihar was searched by the Election Commission and the administration. @ECISVEEP Release a video and tell the country which NDA leaders' helicopters were checked during the election campaign."

Rathorre, who is the chief spokesperson of the Congress' Bihar unit, shared a video to claim that the chief electoral officer of Bihar is herself monitoring the checking of Kharge's helicopter in Samastipur.

"The EC should clarify whether such checking of choppers of Congress leaders is routine and whether similar checks were also conducted on top leaders of the NDA," Rathorre said in his video message.

Earlier on Saturday, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge wrote to the EC and expressed his surprise over it castigating him for "obstructing" the ongoing election and said that he understands the "pressures" ECI is working under. —*PTI*

NATION

POLL PULSE

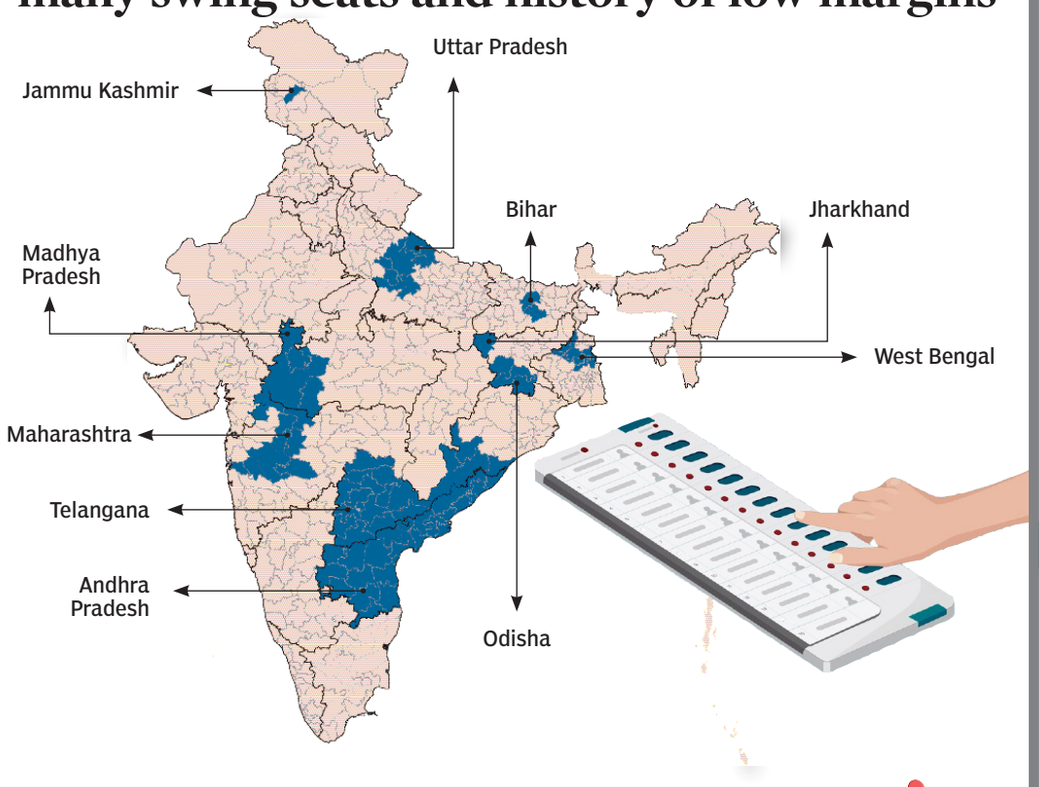
LOK SABHA ELECTION 2024

SALAR | MONDAY | 13 MAY 2024

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU 2

Phase 4 marks halfway of polls

Close contests will be seen in this Phase with many swing seats and history of low margins



ANDHRA PRADESH

NO OF CANDIDATES: 454

Phases: 1 | Phase 4 seats: 25

Constituencies: Amalapuram, Anakapalli, Anantapur, Aruku, Bapatla, Chittoor Eluru, Guntur, Hindupur, Kadapa, Kakinada, Kurnool, Machilipatnam, Nandyal, Narasaraopet, Narsapuram, Nellore, Ongole, Rajahmundry, Rajampet, Srikakulam, Tirupati, Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram

KEY PLAYERS

YS SHARMILA, CONGRESS
Seat: Kadapa

YS Sharmila is the current president of the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee and younger sister of YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, the current chief minister of Andhra Pradesh. She is the daughter of YS Rajasekhara Reddy, the former chief minister of the state. In 2021, Sharmila stated that she had political differences with her brother Jagan, who is the founder of the YSR Congress Party and formed a new party YSR Telangana Party, which was later merged with Indian National Congress.

MADDILA GURUMOORTHY, YSRCP
Seat: Tirupati

Maddila Gurumoorthy is the incumbent MP of Tirupati, a seat he won in 2021 bypolls, which were held following the death of sitting YSRCP's MP Balli Durga Prasad Rao. He is looking for a second term focusing on development projects. He is banking on numerous development initiatives he started during his tenure. YSRCP has MLAs in all 7 Assembly segments that fall under the seat

BIHAR

NO OF CANDIDATES: 55

Phases: 7 | Phase 4 seats: 5

Constituencies: Darbhanga, Ujiarpur, Samastipur, Begusarai, Munger

KEY PLAYERS

GIRIRAJ SINGH, BJP
Seat: Begusarai

Minister of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Department Giriraj Singh is a senior BJP leader & is known for his controversial statements such as asking Hindus to eat only jhatka meat and give up on halal food. He however seems to have fallen out of favour with his own party workers who recently greeted him with black flags at a public meeting. In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, Giriraj had secured a resounding victory, defeating then CPI leader Kanhaiya Kumar by a substantial margin.

LALIT KUMAR YADAV, RJD
Seat: Darbhanga

Lalit Kumar Yadav, is a senior leader of Rashtriya Janata Dal representing Darbhanga Rural constituency in Darbhanga district in Bihar Assembly. He is currently the Minister for Public Health Engineering Department in the state. He was first elected to the Assembly in 1995 as a member of Rashtriya Janata Dal, a seat he has continuously held for the last 29 years.

JAMMU AND KASHMIR

NO OF CANDIDATES: 44

Phases: 7 | Phase 4 seats: 2

Name of Constituencies: Anantnag-Rajouri, Srinagar

KEY PLAYERS

MEHBOOBA MUFTI, PDP
Seat: Anantnag- Rajouri

PDP President and former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti is contesting Lok Sabha elections from Anantnag-Rajouri seat, which was carved out from parts of Anantnag-Pulwama and Jammu-Poonch-Rajouri Lok Sabha seats following delimitation exercise in 2022. She has asked voters to use the current election as a way of expressing unhappiness with the Abrogation of Article 370.

MIAN ALTAF, NC
Seat: Anantnag-Rajouri

Mian Altaf hails from Wangath area of Ganderbal in central Kashmir. His family has political and spiritual influence on the tribal community. His family has won 9 Assembly elections since 1967, which includes his five Assembly election wins since 1987. He has been a Cabinet minister twice. He is the grandson of saint Mian Nizam ud Din, the founding president of Gujjar-Jat Conference, a socio political body established in 1932.

1,717
Total nuumber of candidates

JHARKHAND

NO OF CANDIDATES: 45

Phases: 7
Phase 4 seats: 4

Constituencies: Singhbhum, Khunti, Lohardaga, Palamau

KEY PLAYERS

ARJUN MUNDA, BJP
Seat: Khunti

Munda is the Union Minister of Tribal Affairs and Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare. Munda is the sitting MP and has been an influential voice in the development and governance of the state of Jharkhand. He has been the CM of the state for 3 terms and is respected as a tribal leader. The seat faces various issues such as trafficking, illegal opium cultivation, and unemployment.

Joba Manjhi, JMM
Seat: Singhbhum

Joba Manjhi was elected to the Jharkhand Legislative Assembly from Manoharpur in 2014 as a member of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha. She was sworn in as minister of Social Welfare, Women and Child Development and Tourism in first Arjun Munda cabinet from March 2003 to March 2005. She was wife of Devendra Majhi a leader of Singhbhum's Jungle Andolan.

MADHYA PRADESH

NO OF CANDIDATES: 74

Phases: 7
Phase 4 seats: 8

Constituencies: Dewas, Ujjain, Mandsour, Ratlam, Dhar, Indore, Khargone, Khandwa

KEY PLAYERS

MAHENDRA SINGH SOLANKI BJP
Seat: Dewas

A sitting MP from Dewas, Mahendra Singh Solanki was elected to the Parliament in the 2019 elections as a BJP candidate. He is known for making controversial statements such as India will finally be left with two groups of people – the nationalists and the traitors.

Kantilal Bhuria, Congress
Seat: Ratlam

A former minister of Tribal Affairs in the Manmohan Singh cabinet, Bhuria is a senior Congress leader who has held positions such as agriculture minister and Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution minister.

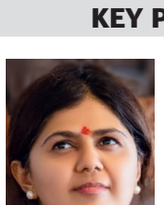
MAHARASHTRA

NO OF CANDIDATES: 298

Phases: 7
Phase 4 seats: 11

Constituencies: Nandurbar, Jalgaon, Raver, Jalna, Aurangabad, Maval, Pune, Shirur, Ahmednagar, Shirdi, Beed

KEY PLAYERS



PANKAJA MUNDE BJP
Seat: Beed

Daughter of Gopinath Munde, former deputy CM of Maharashtra in the 1990s. Pankaja Munde was the Minister of Rural and Women, Child Development in the Devendra Fadnavis cabinet. She is known as a 'businesswoman' in the Sugar Factory & Bank sector. She received 'The Powerful Politician' award in the year 2017 and one of the mass and firebrand leaders from Maharashtra state.

Karan Pawar, Shiv Sena - UBT
Seat: Jalgaon

Though Karan Pawar has no state-level identity yet, the youngster is quite famous in the Jalgaon-Dhule region. He was formerly in BJP. Pawar is the grandson of former Parola-Erandol MLA Bhaskar Rao Patil. His uncle Satish Patil is one of the prominent figures in politics from the region. He will face MVA candidate Smita Wagh. He also won Parola municipal election as municipal president.

WEST BENGAL

Phases: 7
Phase 4 seats: 5

Constituencies: Baharampur, Krishnanagar, Ranaghat, Bardhaman Purba, Burdwan-Durgapur, Asansol, Bolpur, Birbhum

NO OF CANDIDATES: 75

KEY PLAYERS

ADHIR RANJAN CHAUDHURY, Congress
Seat: Baharampur

The seat is stronghold of Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, who won the seat on five previous occasions on the trot. He is gearing up to seek a sixth term from the constituency. However, he will face TMC's Yusuf Pathan, who is also a well known cricketer.

MAHUA MOITRA, TMC
Seat: Krishnanagar

Expelled TMC MP Mahua Moitra won the Krishnanagar seat, yet another region comprising a significant population of Matuas, in 2019 by more than 63,000 votes garnering 45 per cent of the total votes polled. An outspoken critic of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Moitra was disqualified and was expelled last year in cash for a query case following a Lok Sabha ethics committee recommendation.

ODISHA

NO OF CANDIDATES: 37

Phases: 7 | Phase 4 seats: 4

Name of Constituencies: Kalahandi, Nabarangapur, Berhampur, Koraput

KEY PLAYERS

DRAUPADI MANJHI, CONGRESS
Seat: Kalahandi

Draupadi Manjhi from Thuamul Rampur in Kalahandi is the general secretary of Congress's state women wing. Kalahandi, once known for abject poverty and starvation deaths, is now being projected as the hallmark of Odisha's transformation making it a prestigious seat for all three parties.

PARDEEP KUMAR PANIGRAHY, BJP
Seat: Berhampur

Once a former aide of Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik, Pradeep Panigrahy joined BJP in March 2024, just ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. Despite his past controversies, including a stint of seven months in jail for allegedly deceiving youths with false job promises, the nomination for Berhampur Lok Sabha seat has placed Panigrahy directly in the political heartland of Ganjam—Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's home district.

TELANGANA

NO OF CANDIDATES: 525

Phases: 7 | Phase 4 seats: 17

Name of Constituencies: Adilabad, Peddapalle, Karimnagar, Nizamabad, Zahirabad, Medak, Malkajgiri, Secundrabad, Hyderabad, Chelvella, Mahbubnagar, Nagarkurnool, Nalgonda, Bhongir, Warangal, Mahabubabad, Khammam

KEY PLAYERS

ASADUDDIN OWAISI, AIMIM
Seat: Hyderabad

Asaduddin Salahuddin Owaisi is the President of the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM). He is a four time Member of Parliament representing the Hyderabad constituency in Lok Sabha. For years, he has been regularly listed by Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre (RISSC), among the 500 Most Influential Muslims of the world.

CHALLA VAMSHI CHAND REDDY, Congress
Seat: Mahbubnagar

Challa Vamshi Chand Reddy was elected as an MLA from Kalwakurthy constituency, situated in Mahbubnagar district of Telangana on a Congress ticket. Before being elected as an MLA, he was the President of Andhra Pradesh Youth Congress.

UTTAR PRADESH

NO OF CANDIDATES: 130

Phases: 7 | Phase 4 seats: 13

Name of Constituencies: Shahjahanpur, Kheri, Dhaurahra, Sitapur, Hardoi, Misrikh, Unnao,

KEY PLAYERS

AKHILESH YADAV, SP
Seat: Anantnag- Kannauj

Son of Mulayam Singh Yadav, founder of Samajwadi Party, Akhilesh Yadav is the national president of the Samajwadi Party who served as the 20th Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. Having assumed the chief minister's office on 15 March, 2012 at the age of 38, he was the youngest person to have held the office till date. He was elected as Member of the 13th Lok Sabha in 2000 from Kannauj.

SAKSHI MAHARAJ, BJP
Seat: Unnao

Sakshi Maharaj is a politico-religious leader belonging to the Bharatiya Janata Party. Known as a firebrand leader of the party, he has often been at the centre of controversies for his Islamophobic views. He holds a PhD degree and runs various educational institutions and ashrams across India under the banner of Sakshi Maharaj Group for which he is also serving as its present director.

Moral policing incident sparks outrage in Bidar

BIDAR, 12 MAY

Haveri, Basavakalyan in Bidar district witnessed another case of moral policing where a Muslim woman was attacked by some youths of the same religion for merely sitting with a Hindu man in a park on the outskirts of Basavakalyan. The man, identified as an auto driver, faced the ire of the assailants, who accused the pair of engaging in an immoral relationship and tarnishing the reputation of Muslims. The distressing episode, captured on video, has since gone viral on social media platforms, sparking widespread condemnation and calls for action against the perpetrators. The incident serves as a stark reminder of the dangers of moral policing and the importance of upholding individual freedoms and choices in a diverse society.
—Salar News

PHOTO: SALAR

Basaveshwara banner torn in Kalaburagi

KALABURAGI, 12 MAY

A group of individuals vandalised a banner featuring the portrait of Jagadguru Basaveshwara, a revered 12th-century poet, and philosopher near the railway station gate in the district amid the Basava Jayanti celebrations on Saturday night. Veerashaiva Lingayat Samaj youth leaders including Anand Patila Naraboli, Jagadeva Diggaonkar, Prasad Avanti, Ambarisha Sulegaon, and Santosh Haveri, condemned the insult to Basaveshwara, urging for immediate action. Following this Police Sub-Inspector Sudarshan Reddy assured strict measures against the perpetrators. Reddy convinced the youth leaders to remove the damaged banner. The torn banner was duly taken down under the supervision and guidance of PSI Reddy.
—Salar News

13-year-old raped in Tumakuru, father absconding

TUMAKURU, 12 MAY

A 13-year-old minor girl was allegedly sexually assaulted by her father at their residence in Hippetopu Badavane, Tipaturu taluk on 6 May. However, the incident came to light only when her mother filed a complaint on Sunday stating that the father had allegedly raped her daughter while she was away from home. The father, who had previously attempted to molest the daughter fled the scene after the crime. The Tiptur police have registered an FIR under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act of 2012. A police search is underway to nab the accused who is absconding. Earlier, on 14 March, another minor from Tumakuru was gang-raped by three men at the Siddaganga Matha fair.
—Salar News

CM rules out CBI probe in sex scandal case

'It's not that I don't have faith in CBI; cases that need be handed over to CBI will be given'

BENGALURU, 12 MAY

Ruling out transfer of the probe into sexual abuse charges against Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday said he reposed faith in the Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the State police, which is investigating the case.

Questioning BJP's locus standi to make such a demand, he asked the Opposition party as to why it doesn't trust the police. He also hit out at BJP for making misleading statements aimed at causing confusion in the minds of the people about SIT, which is conducting a "fair probe".

"We are getting the probe done by our police (SIT), we have belief and faith in our police. They are efficient," Siddaramaiah said.

Speaking to reporters here, he pointed out that BJP had once called CBI "Corruption Bureau of Investigation", and the party never handed over a single case to the central agency while in power, despite Congress' repeated demands.

CM Siddaramaiah and Prajwal Revanna PHOTO: PTI

- BJP had once called CBI "Corruption Bureau of Investigation", and the party never handed over a single case to the central agency while in power, despite Congress' repeated demands

He further said, "It's not that I don't have faith in CBI, the cases that need be handed over to CBI will be given. When I was the Chief Minister earlier, I had given seven cases to CBI, but there was no conviction even in a single case... that doesn't mean I dont have faith in CBI... SIT is also an investigating agency like the CBI, we will get the probe done by our police."

Responding to allegations that BJP leader Devaraje Gowda was arrested to save ruling Congress and its leaders, who are allegedly behind circulation of explicit videos, he said BJP's job is to make false allegations.

To a query on Union Minister Pralhad Joshi's alleged statement accusing government of "witch hunt" against BJP workers in connection with the case, he said, Pralhad Joshi is a Central Minister and he should speak responsibly. *—PTI*

BJP demands CBI probe, accuses SIT of 'witch hunt'

BENGALURU, 12 MAY

BJP on Sunday continued their demand for a Central Bureau of Investgation (CBI) probe into sexual abuse charges against Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna and related cases, to ensure a fair investigation.

Prajwal, who is grandson of JD(S) patriarch HD Deve Gowda, is facing charges of sexually abusing women.

While the government has formed a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the cases, BJP and JD(S have demanded that it be handed over to the CBI.

Former chief minister Basavaraj Bommai said bringing out the guilty and ensuring punishment was the primary duty of the SIT, and accused it of "witch hunting".

"People are questioning the way in which the inquiry is progressing. A complaint has been lodged with the National Commission of Women about (a woman) being forced to file a complaint and also complaints are being filed against those who gave information about the sexual abuse case," Bommai said.

Responding to a question on demands that Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar should also be subjected to inquiry, Bommai said, "Inquiring all those linked to the main case and related other cases, will only ensure complete the probe. So, we are saying that if the case is handed over to the CBI, it will be conducted in a fair manner."

Meanwhile, Leader of Opposition in R Ashoka said, BJP's clear stand is that the party will support its alliance partner JD(S) in its fight, and there should be a CBI probe in this case. *—PTI*

'SIT NOT GOING ABROAD TO BRING PRAJWAL BACK'

BENGALURU, 12 MAY

Home Minister G Parameshwara on Sunday said that the Special Investigation Team (SIT), probing into sexual abuse charges against Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna, will not be going abroad to bring him back, and the Interpol will share information about him.

He also cautioned political leaders about making public statements or sharing information in connection with the case, which is sensitive.

Prajwal is said to have flown abroad on 27 April, a day after the first phase of Lok Sabha polls in Karnataka was held.

Asked whether JD(S) leader HD Kumaraswamy will also be served notice, the Minister said he was a chief minister and he believes that has taken this case seriously. *—PTI*

SHOWERS OF JOY

A commuter is caught unawares as rains lash Chikkamagaluru, on Sunday PHOTO: PTI

EC Ningaraj to contest for Teacher's MLC elections

MYSURU, 12 MAY

EC Ningaraj Gowda is BJP-JD(S) alliance MLC candidate for Karnataka South Teacher's Constituency, encompassing Mysuru, Mandya, Chamrajanagar, and Hassan district.

Ningraj Gowda, a seasoned organisation member with years of experience, will face off against the likely Congress candidate,former MLC Marithibbe Gowda, who also hails from Mandya district.

Former MLC from JD(S), KT Srikanth Gowda and Vivekananda, were initially contenders for the seat. However, BJP's decision has left JD(S) aspirants reconsidering their options. Srikanth Gowda, convened a meeting with his supporters and plans to submit his nomination papers on 16 May, adding an twist to electoral scenario.

Expressing gratitude for the opportunity, Ningaraj Gowda emphasised his rural background and farmer's family roots. His journey to secure a ticket has been marked by persistent efforts, having sought nominations in previous elections without success.

Ningaraj Gowda PHOTO: SALAR

Ningaraj Gowda, 51, hailing from Eregowdakoppalu village in Mandya district, boasts an impressive resume in education and public service. His tenure includes roles as a university board member, finance committee member, and syndicate member at Mysuru University, along with a rich history of advocacy for educational causes.

Asserting his commitment to alliance, Ningaraj remains optimistic about securing victory with the collective support of both parties' leaders and dedicated efforts of his supporters. *—Salar News*

WILD ANIMAL MENACE WORRIES COFFEE FARMERS

CHIKKAMAGALURU, 12 MAY

The bison menace has increased in Chikkamagaluru region lead to massive concerns to the locals. According to locals especially, in hilly areas the presence of bison has notably increased. In many coffee estates bison destroying coffee plants, growers incurring losses of thousands of rupees.

On 12 May, another incident unfolded as a herd of wild deer ventured from the forests to the coffee estates area in search of fodder. Villages like Gorasudige and Thodadur, under the Thotadur gram panchayat in Kalasa taluk, have witnessed an influx of wild deer.

The agricultural sector is facing significant losses, particularly in coffee plantations, due to herds of wild boars causing extensive damage. The situation has become so dire that labourers are hesitant to work. *—Salar News*

POWER OF CONFIDENCE

Cong, INDIA bloc will govern country: DKS

BENGALURU, 12 MAY

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Sunday asserted that his party along with the INDIA bloc will come to power and govern the country in the days ahead, after ongoing Lok Sabha polls.

The State Congress chief also said that he and his party are not bothered by the BJP-JD(S) alliance continuing for the biennial election to six seats (three each from graduates' and teachers' constituencies) of the Karnataka Legislative Council on 3 June.

"In my opinion, Congress and INDI Alliance will come to power. There is no chance for a BJP person to become the prime minister.

This country will be governed under the leadership of the Congress party and the INDI Alliance hereon, we have that much confidence," Shivakumar said after a party meeting here.

He was responding to a question on AAP Chief and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's comments asking BJP as to who will be its next prime minister as Narendra Modi will have to retire next year as he attains 75 years of age.

Meeting of party leaders and office bearers were held today regarding Legislative Council polls to elect members from graduates and teachers constituencies. Directions have been given to everyone to actively participate in this election without leaving it on the candidates, and responsibilities have been fixed, Shivakumar said.

Instructions have been given to hold MLC polls too unitedly, like it was done in the case of Assembly and Parliament polls, he said. Asked about JD(S) and BJP alliance continuing in the MLC polls too, the KPCC chief said, "Let them be together permanently, we don't have any objections. Let them do anything, we are not bothered."

The party today announced former MLC Marithibbe Gowda, who quit JD(S) recently, as the party's candidate from the South Teachers' Constituency. Congress had already announced candidates to other five segments: Ramoji Gowda (Bengaluru Graduates'), Chandrashekara B Patil (North East Graduates'), Ayanur Manjunath (South-West Graduates'), KK Manjunath (South West Teachers'), and DT Srinivas (South East Teachers'). *—Salar News*

DK Shivakumar addresses a meeting in the City on Sunday PHOTO: PTI

DKS urges supporters not to celebrate his birthday

BENGALURU, 12 MAY

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar urged his supporters, party workers and fans not to celebrate his birthday on 15 May given the ongoing drought situation in the State. "Please do not put out any cutouts, banners, hoardings or organise birthday events for my birthday this year. You may send me your wishes from wherever you are and your love and affection are enough for me," he said. Shivakumar advised party leaders, party workers, supporters and fans not to visit his residence or office on 15 May as he will be in North India for the election campaign. *—Salar News*

ON MOTHER'S DAY

City police set up creche for women employees

BENGALURU, 12 MAY

On the occasion of Mother's Day, Bengaluru City Police has set up a dedicated daycare designed for women police officers and women staffers at the Commissioner's office. The daycare centre is part of Project Rashmi, an initiative by the Bengaluru Smart City Limited (BenSCL). Female officers can now leave their children in the care of trained professionals while they attend to their responsibilities.

The initiative will benefit nearly 1,000 women employees.

The newly established lounge also marks a significant upgrade from previous facilities. In 2022, the women's lounge at the Commissionerate was the third of its kind under Project Rashmi, but it lacked essential amenities such as a first-aid kit, baby changing station, and reading materials.

This will benefit 1,000 women employees PHOTO: SALAR

Sheela Kumari, a woman constable said on a video published by City police on X, "I have a 6-year-old and it is difficult to manage my kids during the working hours. But now this lounge will help me to go visit whenever I want to."

Suma, another constable said, "I have to pay Rs 3,000 at the day care centre and if my child stays longer, I had to pay extra but now it becomes more flexible and now I can visit her during my free time."

The newly renovated lounge now offers a variety of amenities, including resting beds, toys for children, and a fully equipped kitchen, fostering a supportive environment for officers and their families. Additionally, there is a designated space where lactating mothers can conveniently heat or store their milk using the microwave or fridge.

The lounge is not exclusively for police personnel but is also for women clerks and housekeeping staffers. This lounge will now benefit a significant portion of the control room staffers, who work round the clock in shifts. Additionally, the housekeeping staff is entirely female and provides easy access and support for all employees, regardless of their role or working hours.

The day care is located within the Commissioner of Police office premises. Officers can now leave their children with trained professionals while they attend to their responsibilities. *—Salar News*

TV actress Pavithra dies in a road accident

BENGALURU, 12 MAY

Pavithra Jayaram, actress known for her roles in popular daily soaps such as Robot Family, Jokali, Neeli, and Radha Ramana dies in a car crash near Mehbooba Nagar in Andhra Pradesh.

In a tragic turn of events, the car carrying Pavithra lost control and collided with the divider. Subsequently, a bus travelling from Hyderabad to Vanaparthi collided with the right side of the car. Alongside Pavithra, her cousin Apeksha, driver Srikanth, and actor Chandrakanth also sustained serious injuries in the accident and have been admitted to the hospital near Mehbooba Nagar.

Hailing from Hanakere village in Mandya, Pavithra began her journey in the Kannada small screen industry before venturing into Telugu daily serials, notably Trinayani. The 35-year-old actress was known for her versatility and dedication to her craft. Besides her on-screen presence, Pavithra managed her own YouTube channel, where she shared glimpses of her personal life and behind-the-scenes moments from her television serials.

Pavithra Jayaram PHOTO: SALAR

Before her acting career took off, Pavithra worked as a librarian and salesgirl in Bengaluru. From portraying supporting roles to eventually starring in lead roles in daily soaps, Pavithra's journey in the entertainment industry was marked by her talent and hard work. *—Salar News*

TUSKER SUCCUMBS TO ELECTROCUTION IN CHIKKAMAGALURU

BENGALURU, 12 MAY

A 35-year-old tusker died after being electrocuted near a private coffee estate in Chikkamagaluru district. The incident was found by the forest officials on Sunday. According to the forest department reports, the tusker, was attempting to reach a jackfruit, when it brought down a branch that was in contact with an overhead power line. This resulted in the animal's death. Joseph Hoover, a former Forest Department Board Member and the President of the United Conservation Movement, told Salar News "This tragic event has reignited concerns about safety measures to prevent such accidents.

We urge the authorities to take immediate action to prevent such tragedies in the future."he said.
—Salar News

Defamation case: SC to hear Kejri's plea today

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Monday a plea of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal challenging a Delhi High Court order upholding the summons issued to him in a criminal defamation case for retweeting an allegedly defamatory video circulated by YouTuber Dhruv Rathee in May 2018. A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta is likely to hear the matter in which Kejriwal has admitted that he "committed a mistake" by retweeting the alleged defamatory video. On 11 March, the top court asked Kejriwal whether he wanted to give an apology to the complainant in the matter. Kejriwal on 26 February told the apex court that he made a mistake by retweeting an allegedly defamatory video circulated by YouTuber Rathee related to the BJP IT Cell. The counsel appearing for complainant told the top court that Kejriwal may issue an apology on social media platforms.—*PTI*

SC to hear Soren's plea today in ED case

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Monday a plea of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha leader and former chief minister Hemant Soren challenging his arrest by Enforcement Directorate (ED) in a money laundering case linked to an alleged land scam. A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta will hear the plea of Soren in which he has challenged 3 May order of Jharkhand High Court dismissing his petition against the arrest. Soren had also sought interim bail for campaigning in the Lok Sabha elections.—*PTI*

Cong takes a jibe at MP CM over gaffe about MLA

BHOPAL, 12 MAY

Madhya Pradesh Congress has taken a swipe at Chief Minister Mohan Yadav after he apparently forgot the Assembly seat of his party MLA from the state during an event. BJP, however, hit back saying the Congress is upset because of the welfare works done by Yadav's government. A video of Yadav, during a programme on Friday at Janapav under the Mhow Assembly seat in Indore from where Usha Thakur is BJP MLA, surfaced on online on Sunday. Yadav, while addressing the gathering, is heard in the video congratulating his cabinet minister Kailash Vijayvargiya on his birthday. "I congratulate Kailash ji Bhaisaheb. He worked here together with Usha ji. Now even though Usha ji is no longer the MLA here, earlier Usha ji was the MLA here." Congress shared the video on X and claimed, "Meet the bhulakkad (forgetful) Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh.—*PTI*

MP CM reacts to Cong candidate's withdrawal

INDORE, 12 MAY

Taking a dig at Congress over its Indore Lok Sabha seat candidate withdrawing from the fray at the last moment, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has said it was not his party's fault if the "bridegroom fled before the wedding". Congress received a jolt in Indore after its candidate Akshay Kanti Bam withdrew his nomination on 29 April, the last date of withdrawal, and later joined BJP. The Opposition party, which has no candidate left in the fray for 13 May election in Indore, is insulting democracy by appealing to local voters to press the NOTA (None Of The Above) button, Yadav said. "If someone's child runs away from home, whose fault is it? They are your children, you should take care of them," he said. Yadav also participated in a roadshow in Indore city in support of BJP candidate and sitting MP Shankar Lalwani. Yadav termed the Opposition INDIA bloc as "Ghamandiya" alliance. —*PTI*

LS polls: In phase 5, only 12% in fray are women

23 per cent have declared criminal cases against themselves *PHOTO: PTI*

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

The representation of women in the ongoing Lok Sabha polls continues to remain dismally low, as only about 12 per cent of the candidates in the fray in the fifth phase are female, according to an analysis by poll rights body ADR.

The ADR analysis also showed that nearly 23 per cent have declared criminal cases against themselves and about 18 per cent have serious criminal cases pending.

Out of the total 695 candidates in the fifth phase on 20 May, only 82 of them are women, the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) said.

In the first phase of the elections, 135 (8 per cent) female candidates contested while 100 (8 per cent) women candidates fought in the second phase. Similarly, in the third phase of the elections, 123 (9 per cent) female candidates contested while in the fourth phase, as many as 170 (10 per cent) such candidates are in the fray.

Out of the 695 candidates under scrutiny, 18 per cent (122 candidates) have serious criminal cases pending, including that of murder, crimes against women, and hate speech. Three candidates have declared convictions against them.

Two (50 per cent) out of four candidates from AIMIM, four (40 per cent) out of 10 candidates from SP, seven (39 per cent) out of 18 candidates from the Congress, two (33 per cent) out of six candidates from Shiv Sena, 12 (30 per cent) out of 40 candidates from BJP, two (29 per cent) out of seven candidates from TMC, one (25 per cent) out of four candidates from the RJD and one (13 per cent) out of eight candidates from Shiv Sena (UBT) have declared serious criminal cases against themselves.

- 29 candidates have declared cases related to crime against women. A notable 33 per cent of the candidates are 'crorepatis' (those with assets exceeding Rs 1 crore). The average asset per candidate stood at Rs 3.56 crore.42 per cent have educational qualifications between 5th and 12th standard, and only 50 per cent being graduates or above

29 candidates have declared cases related to crime against women. A notable 33 per cent of the candidates are 'crorepatis' (those with assets exceeding Rs 1 crore). The average asset per candidate stood at Rs 3.56 crore.42 per cent have educational qualifications between 5th and 12th standard, and only 50 per cent being graduates or above.

Additionally, 26 candidates are diploma holders, 20 are just literate, and five are illiterate, the ADR said. —*PTI*

'BJP paid 70 women to take part in Sandeshkhali protest'

Video alleges LoP Adhikari as the brain behind the conspiracy

KOLKATA, 12 MAY

In a purported video that surfaced from Sandeshkhali, a local BJP leader was heard saying that over 70 women had received Rs 2,000 each for taking part in protests against local Trinamoll Congress (TMC) satrap Shahjahan Sheikh and his aides who were accused of sexual assault and land grab.

In the video, lasting over 45 minutes, a man resembling Sandeshkhali mandal President Gangadhar Kayal told this to the questioner. It was Kayal who had earlier said in another purported clip, the first in a series in the past week, that the rape allegations were "staged".

In the latest tape that surfaced on Saturday night, Kayal was heard saying that 70 women got Rs 2,000 each for taking part in protests against Sheikh who was arrested and later suspended by the police.

"We will need Rs 2.5 lakh in cash for 50 booths where 30 per cent of protesters would be women. We have to keep the SC, ST and OBC people here in good humour by paying them satisfactorily. In any situation, women will form the front row confronting the police," he said in the video.

Kayal could not be contacted, but the BJP has dubbed the videos as fake.

TMC Spokesperson Riju Dutta said,"The truth of BJP's fake narrative on Sandeshkhali is tumbling out of the closet."

Multiple purported videos of Sandeshkhali women have surfaced and shared by the TMC in the past few days.

- The second video was about women, who had earlier filed rape complaints, claiming that they were made to sign a blank paper by BJP leaders. In another clip, BJP candidate from Basirhat constituency Rekha Patra claimed that she "doesn't know the rape survivors who were taken to Delhi to meet the President"

In the first such videotape that emerged on 4 May, Kayal was heard saying that the "staged" protests were lodged at the behest of Leader of the Opposition, Suvendu Adhikari, who was behind the "whole conspiracy".

The second video was about women, who had earlier filed rape complaints, claiming that they were made to sign a blank paper by BJP leaders and coerced to go to the police station.

In another clip, BJP candidate from Basirhat constituency and Sandeshkhali protestor Rekha Patra claimed that she "doesn't know the rape survivors who were taken to Delhi to meet the President."

"TMC is using fake videos to change the narrative ahead of the polls. TMC has the least regard for NCW or the dignity of the women of Sandeshkhali. All the videos released are fake and doctored," BJP state Spokesperson Samik Bhattacharya said.

—*PTI*

TMC claims that a Sandeshkhali woman was forced by NCW Chief Rekha Sharma to sign a blank paper without knowing its purpose *PHOTO: PTI*

TMC files plaint against NCW Chief, BJP leaders

KOLKATA, 12 MAY

The All India Trinamool Congress has filed a complaint with the Election Commission of India seeking criminal proceedings against National Commission for Women (NCW) chief Rekha Sharma and BJP leaders including Piyali Das for "commission of serious offences of forgery, cheating, fraud, intimidation and criminal conspiracy upon innocent women of Sandeshkhali."

"An interview of a woman from Sandeshkhali was shared on X platform on 10.05.24, which reveals that Smt. Rekha Sharma, Chairperson of the NCW, along with members/ leaders of the BJP, including Smt. Piyali Das (a BJP member from Sandeshkhali), have committed serious offences of forgery, cheating, fraud, criminal intimidation and criminal conspiracy by exploiting innocent women of Sandeshkhali, for political gains," the complaint stated.

The Trinamool claimed that during the interview, a woman from Sandeshkhali shared her distressing experience in which she stated that she was coerced through threats of violence by Rekha Sharma and Piyali Das, to sign a blank paper without knowing its purpose.

Later, when the police issued her a notice, she learnt that she had been made a de-facto complainant in a rape case and she realized that her signature was used to file a false rape complaint without her consent, the TMC said.

When she tried to withdraw the complaint, she was subjected to intimidation and threats from local BJP members, the party said.

—*ANI*

WAR OF WORDS

In Rae Bareli, Shah poses 5 questions to RaGa

RAEBARELI, 12 MAY

Amit Shah *PHOTO: PTI*

In an apparent bid to corner Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in his family stronghold of Rae Bareli, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday posed five questions before him and asked him to make his stand clear on those questions.

"I want to ask five questions publicly - triple talaq, which was abolished by Modi ji... Was it good or bad? Rahul baba, answer the people of Rae Bareli whether you want to bring back triple talaq? They were saying that they will bring it back. Today, I want to ask in the presence of the public of Rae Bareli to make (your stand) clear," Shah said.

"Instead of Muslim personal law, should there be a Uniform Civil Code or not? They say that they will bring (back) the Muslim personal law," he said.

On surgical strikes, Shah said, "Modi ji conducted the surgical strikes, was it good or bad? Rahul baba raises questions on surgical strikes. (I) want to ask him, do you support the surgical strikes or not?

"I also want to ask him why you did not go to the Ram temple in Ayodhya (after 'Pran Pratishtha'). Give an answer," Shah said.

"At last, Rahul baba should tell the people of Rae Bareli that do you support the scrapping of Article 370 or not? Rahul baba should answer these five questions," Shah said, adding that the former Congress president should seek the votes of the people of Raebareli after answering these questions.

- Rahul is fighting the Lok Sabha elections from the Rae Bareli constituency, the seat held by his mother Sonia Gandhi, who recently moved to the Rajya Sabha, for the last two decades. Rahul Gandhi is also contesting from Wayanad in Kerala

Rahul is fighting the Lok Sabha elections from the Rae Bareli constituency, the seat held by his mother Sonia Gandhi, who recently moved to the Rajya Sabha, for the last two decades. Rahul Gandhi is also contesting from Wayanad in Kerala.

BJP has fielded Uttar Pradesh Minister Dinesh Pratap Singh from the constituency.

Rae Bareli will vote in the fifth phase of the Lok Sabha elections on 20 May. —*PTI*

'Hope 33% women's quota will come to Priyanka's aid'

HAMIRPUR, 12 MAY

Senior BJP leader and Union minister Anurag Thakur took a swipe at Priyanka Gandhi Vadra for not contesting Lok Sabha elections, saying she could possibly benefit from the 33 per cent reservation for women in Parliament brought by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to make her electoral debut.

In an interview with PTI, Thakur also taunted Priyanka's husband Robert Vadra for failing to secure a Congress ticket for himself.

The Union minister said Gandhi family members were welcome in active politics and Congress should in fact work hard because the country wants a strong opposition in a parliamentary democracy.

Attacking Gandhi for abandoning his old Amethi seat, Thakur said the former Congress chief had "runaway" to neighbouring Rae Bareli. Asked if the BJP considers Priyanka a formidable rival since it has dubbed Gandhi as "nonserious", the minister said that was for the people to decide.

—*PTI*

ED summons J'khand min

RANCHI, 12 MAY

Enforcement Directorate (ED) has summoned Jharkhand Rural Development Minister and Congress leader Alamgir Alam for questioning in a money laundering case on 14 May, official sources said Sunday.

ED had last week arrested Alam's personal secretary and state administrative service officer Sanjeev Kumar Lal, 52, and the latter's domestic help Jahangir Alam, 42, following the seizure of more than Rs 32 crore cash from a flat linked to them. —*PTI*

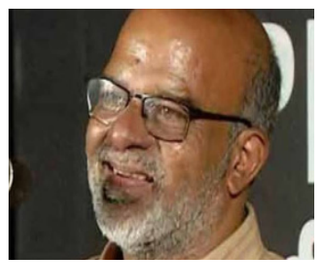
IN KERALA

RMP leader's sexist remark sparks row

KOZHIKODE, 12 MAY

Leader of the Revolutionary Marxist Party (RMP), a key constituent in the Opposition Congress-led UDF, has courted controversy for making an alleged sexist remark against senior CPI (M) leader KK Shailaja and Malayalam film actress Maju Warrier.

RMP leader KS Hariharan made the objectionable remark on Saturday night while speaking at a meeting in Vadakara here which was inaugurated by Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly VD Satheesan.



KS Hariharan *PHOTO: PTI*

The event was organised in response to the ruling LDF's charges that UDF workers had made a morphed video of Shailaja who was a candidate in Vadakara in the recently concluded Lok Sabha polls.

Later, Hariharan came out with a Facebook post saying friends and journalists brought to his notice that he had made an "inappropriate" remark during the speech.

He also expressed regret for his comment. Later, he clarified that it was not done intentionally, but a "natural slip of a tongue".

However, the controversy has refused to die down as people from various walks of life including netizens voiced out against him. —*PTI*

POLL BATTLE

Vijaywada turns battleground for brothers

VIJAYAWADA, 12 MAY

The Vijayawada Parliamentary constituency has emerged as the battleground between brothers K Srinivas of Andhra Pradesh's ruling YSRCP and K Sivanath, candidate of the main opposition TDP in the 13 May Lok Sabha polls.

While Srinivas is a seasoned politician, a transport tycoon-turned-politician, his younger brother Sivanath, also a businessman, is trying his electoral luck for the first time. Srinivas,58, the older brother, was a key TDP leader until some months ago but differences with some party leaders at the local and state level compelled him to jump ship to the YS Jagan Mohan Reddy-led YSRCP in January, according to his supporters.

K Srinivas; K Sivanath *PHOTO: PTI*

One of the main reasons attributed to the exit of Srinivas from TDP was the party's decision to replace him with Sivanath as the candidate for the Lok Sabha election. Popularly known as Kesineni Nani and the owner of the now defunct Kesineni travels company, Srinivas, a Parliamentarian for nearly a decade, had also resigned as an MP when he had quit the TDP.

Vijayawada Lok Sabha constituency encompasses the Assembly constituencies of Tiruvuru (SC), Vijayawada West, Vijayawada Central, Vijayawada East, Mylavaram, Nandigama (SC) and Jaggayyapeta.

In the 2019 election, Srinivas secured 5.75 lakh votes, trouncing his YSRCP rival PV Prasad, who secured 5.66 lakh votes while Janasena's M Prasad Babu got 81,650 votes.

Srinivas's poll plank was the "dedication of his life for the city of Vijayawada," located in the heart of the southern state.

As a two-time MP, Srinivas did manage to gain some goodwill, said a 70-year-old local resident, K Tata Rao.

"Kesineni Nani (Srinivas) developed flyovers in the city. Kanakadurgamma flyover and a flyover near the Benz Circle. He did a good job, he will come next time as well," Rao told PTI.

However, he termed Sivanath contesting against his own brother as a "selfish move." —*PTI*

Fate of WB star candidates to be decided in 4th phase

KOLKATA, 12 MAY

Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury *PHOTO: PTI*

Congress' Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, TMC's Shatrughan Sinha, Mahua Moitra and Yusuf Pathan, BJP's SS Ahluwalia and Dilip Ghosh will be among the candidates whose fates will be decided in the Electronic Voting Machines (EVM)s as eight Lok Sabha constituencies in West Bengal will go to the polls in the fourth phase on Monday.

Spread over Murshidabad, Nadia, Purba Bardhaman, Paschim Bardhaman and Birbhum districts, the problems flagged by voters in these constituencies vary from migrant labour, drinking water supply and drying up of industries, while the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) notification is a bone of contention between the TMC and BJP in some places.

Polling will be held in Baharampur, Krishnanagar, Ranaghat (SC), Bardhaman Purba (SC), Bardhaman-Durgapur, Asansol, Bolpur (SC) and Birbhum in West Bengal in the fourth round of the Lok Sabha polls.

A total of 1,45,30,017 voters, including 71,45,379 women and 282 third-gender electors, are eligible to exercise their franchise in 15,507 polling stations for the eight constituencies, an official said. —*PTI*

HC asks varsity if blast convict can take test online

MUMBAI, 12 MAY

The Bombay High Court has sought to know from the Mumbai University if it can permit a convict in the 7/11 serial bomb blasts case to take his law examinations online. A division bench of Justices Makarand Karnik and Kamal Khata on Friday said owing to security reasons, the situation may warrant to permit the candidate, Mohammed Sajid Marghoob Ansari, to appear for his exams online.On 11 July, 2006, seven bomb blasts occurred in coaches of some local trains in Mumbai, killing 189 persons and injuring 824 others. In 2015, a special court convicted Ansari and others in the blasts case.Ansari had sought permission to appear for the second semester law examinations held by the Siddharth Law College in south Mumbai from 3 to 15 May.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

U'khand: Badrinath temple opens for devotees

Dehradun, 12 May

The doors of the Badrinath temple in the Garhwal Himalayas in Uttarakhand opened for devotees on Sunday after remaining closed during the winter season. With the opening of the shrine, the Chardham Yatra to Badrinath, Kedarnath, Yamunotri and Gangotri has started. The doors of the Badrinath temple were opened after six months amid the chanting of vedic mantras, a pooja and beats of dhols and nagadas, authorities said. Scores of devotees had gathered on the premises of the temple, which was decked up with 15 quintals of flowers, to witness the ceremony despite rain. The doors opened at 6am after two hours of rituals. Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami greeted the people on the occasion.—*PTI*

U'khand gets orange alert for storms in 5 dist

DEHRADUN, 12 MAY

The MeT department here on Sunday issued an orange alert for five districts of Uttarakhand warning of thunderstorms accompanied with lightning and hail in isolated places.Gusty winds at the speed of 40-50km per hour are also predicted in these districts, which include Uttarkashi, Rudraprayag, Chamoli, Bageshwar and Pithoragarh, the MeT office said. A yellow alert has also been issued for the rest of the districts during the period, it said, adding the administration should take all precautionary measures to ensure safety of people.The lightning might cause damage to property, humans and livestock in isolated places, the MeT office said. —*PTI*

J&K: Ammunition recovered from terrorist hideout

JAMMU, 12 MAY

Security forces on Sunday unearthed a terrorist hideout in a forest area in Reasi district of Jammu and Kashmir, recovering a huge cache of arms and ammunition, including nine Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and three pistols, officials said.The hideout was unearthed by the joint troops of Rashtriya Rifles and police during search and cordon operation in Kot Budhan forest in Mahore area this morning, the officials said.Besides nine IEDs fitted with electric detonators and three pistols along with three magazines and 20 rounds, the forces also recovered one kg explosive powder, seven explosive safety fuses, 21 batteries of various types, 50 metre electric wire, 15 Ak assault rounds, eight metre rope, one blanket and three bandages, the officials said.—*PTI*

Nijjar's murder: 4th Indian held over suspected role

The case has severely stained India-Canada relationship

WASHINGTON/OTTAWA, 12 MAY

A fourth Indian national has been arrested by Canadian authorities in connection with the killing of Khalistan separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in this country, a week after police arrested three Indians linked with the high-profile case that has severely strained India's relations with Canada. Amandeep Singh, 22, a resident of Brampton, Surrey, and Abbotsford areas of Canada, has been charged with first-degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder.

Nijjar, 45, was killed outside Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara in Surrey, British Columbia on 18 June, 2023.

The Integrated Homicide Investigation Team (IHIT) of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) said that Singh was arrested on 11 May for his role in the killing of Nijjar. He was already in the custody of the Peel Regional Police for unrelated firearms charges, the release said.

"This arrest shows the nature of our ongoing investigation to hold responsible those that played a role in the homicide of Hardeep Singh Nijjar," said Superintendent Mandeep Mooker, the Officer in Charge of IHIT.

"IHIT pursued the evidence and gained sufficient information for the British Columbia Prosecution Service to charge Amandeep Singh with first-degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder," the police statement said.

Investigators said no further details of the arrest can be released due to on-going investigations and court processes.

IHIT investigators on 3 May arrested three Indian nationals -- Karan Brar,22, Kamalpreet Singh,22, and 28-year-old Karanpreet Singh -- for the murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

All three individuals are Indian nationals living in Edmonton and have been charged with first-degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder.

Amandeep Singh, fourth Indian accused, was arrested by Canadian authorities on charges of role in the killing of Nijjar, on Saturday PHOTO: PTI

- Nijjar, 45, was killed outside Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara in Surrey, British Columbia on 18 June, 2023

The ties between India and Canada came under severe strain following Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations in September last year of the "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Nijjar.

India has dismissed Trudeau's charges as "absurd" and "motivated."

India has been asserting that its "core issue" with Canada remained that of the space given to separatists, terrorists and anti-India elements in that country.

Following Trudeau's allegations last year, India temporarily suspended the issuance of visas to Canadian citizens. The visa services were resumed several weeks later.

—*PTI*

INDIA-CHINA RELATIONS

EAM S Jaishankar said diplomacy is a work of patience and India continues to discuss the issues with the Chinese side PHOTO: PTI

Hope there is resolution of issues: EAM

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

As the eastern Ladakh military standoff entered its fifth year, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said India hopes for a resolution of the remaining issues with China and asserted that a return to normal bilateral ties hinges on peace and tranquillity at the border.

In an exclusive interview to PTI, he said the remaining issues mainly pertained to "patrolling rights" and "patrolling abilities".

Specifically asked when a resolution to the row can be expected in the backdrop of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks to Newsweek magazine last month, Jaishankar said he only provided a "big picture" viewpoint on the matter.

"We would hope that there is a resolution of the remaining issues out there. These issues mainly pertain to patrolling rights and patrolling abilities there," he said.

"I would not link it to the Prime Minister's interview per se. I think the he was giving a big picture viewpoint and his big picture viewpoint was a very reasonable viewpoint which is -- after all as neighbours, every country wants good relations with its neighbours," he said.

"But today, our relations with China are not normal because the peace and tranquillity in the border areas has been disturbed. So he (PM) was expressing the hope that the Chinese side should realise that the present situation is not in its own interest," Jaishankar said.

Modi had said that the border situation needs to be addressed urgently and that stable and peaceful ties between India and China are important for not just the two countries but for the entire region and world.

Jaishankar said diplomacy is a work of patience and India continues to discuss the issues with the Chinese side. "I would say that we need to resolve those issues if the relationship is to come back to normal," he said during the interview on Thursday.

—*PTI*

FIRE IN DELHI BAZAAR

Smoke billows after a fire broke out in a building in Kinari Bazaar area, in New Delhi, on Sunday PHOTO: PTI

BSF RECOVERS CHINA-MADE DRONES IN PUNJAB

AMRITSAR, 12 MAY

The Border Security Forces (BSF) troops recovered a China-made drone with a packet of heroin in Punjab's Amritsar, officials said.

"On 11 May, 2024, during the night hours, vigilant BSF troops on duty intercepted the movement of a drone in the border area of district Amritsar. As per the laid-down drill, BSF troops immediately got into the action and tracked the movement of the drone. The likely dropping zone was cordoned and an extensive search was conducted, "Public Relations Officer of BSF said in a statement.

"At about 11.40pm, BSF troops successfully recovered one small drone along with one packet of suspected heroin ahead of a border security fence in a farming field in village Havelian in district Amritsar, the PRO further said.

The PRO added, "The recovered packet (gross weight- 498 grms appox) was wrapped with yellow adhesive tape and one torch and one nylon loop were found attached to the packet. The recovered drone is a quadcopter (Model- DJI Mavic three Classic, made in China)."

Earlier on Saturday, the Border Security Force (BSF) recovered two packets of suspected heroin from Punjab's Tarn Taran district.

"On 11 May, BSF and Punjab Police recovered one packet of suspected heroin of gross weight 2.175 Kg from village Sankatara and one packet of suspected heroin of gross weight 569 grams from village TJ Singh," the BSF Punjab Frontier PRO stated.

The narcotics were wrapped with yellow coloured adhesive tape and a metal ring and the illuminating sticks were attached to the packets, it added. —*ANI*

Kerala murder: Prime accused held from TN

T'PURAM, 12 MAY

The prime accused in the murder of a 26-year-old man here a day ago, was nabbed, police said on Sunday.

The accused was picked up from a hide out in neighbouring Tamil Nadu.

He was taken into custody and is being interrogated, they said without divulging further details.

The other three accused were still at large.

The officer said a person, who allegedly drove the car of the accused during the time of the crime, was already arrested by the police.

The victim identified as Akhil, was brutally assaulted with sticks and bricks allegedly by a group of men near Karamana here on Friday evening.

He succumbed to his injuries at the Thiruvananthapuram Medical College hospital the same night, police said.

Thiruvananthapuram Deputy Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) Nidhinraj P has said that four accused have been identified and their associates were being questioned as part of the steps to trace them.

PHOTO: PIXABAY

He said the assault on Akhil was in revenge for an alleged altercation between him and the accused several days ago at a bar.

. State General Education Minister V Sivankutty, who visited the house of the victim on Saturday, said the government was considering the matter seriously and steps would be taken to prevent recurrence of such incidents.

—*PTI*

All borders may soon have beehives

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

The Union home ministry has directed all central paramilitary and allied forces to replicate a 'beehives on border fence' beekeeping model initiated by a BSF unit in West Bengal to boost employment opportunities for the locals and create a goodwill with them for strengthening security.

Official sources told PTI that the decision was made during a meeting on "scientific beekeeping and honey mission" that was chaired by Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla at his office at North Block here in April.

The model devised and implemented by the 32nd battalion of the Border Security Force (BSF) deployed to guard the India-Bangladesh international border in West Bengal's Nadia district was "lauded" during the meeting and a direction was issued to all the central armed police forces (CAPFs) to adopt it in their respective areas of responsibility, a senior CAPF officer said.

The other border guarding forces, such as the Sashastra Seema Bal (Nepal and Bhutan borders) and the Indo Tibetan Border Police (China LAC), CAPFs like the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) and other forces like Assam Rifles, the National Security Guard (NSG) and the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) do not have fences to guard but the model can be utilised by them as per their nature of duties, the officer said. The aim of replicating the BSF West Bengal beekeeping model is to generate employment in remote locations.

—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

- The aim of replicating the BSF West Bengal beekeeping model is to generate employment in remote locations

Itanagar-Naharlagun sees surge in dog bite cases

ITANAGAR, 12 MAY

The twin capital city of Itanagar-Naharlagun has witnessed a sharp increase in dog bite cases over the past week, according to the district medical officer's report.

A total of 117 cases have been reported in the last week.

According to a public advisory issued by the Itanagar Capital Region (ICR) Deputy Commissioner's office on Saturday, the surge in cases has been attributed to the large number of unvaccinated stray dogs in the ICR.

To address the issue and prevent further escalation, ICR Deputy Commissioner Shweta Nagarkoti Mehta issued a series of directives.

The DC has urged all pet owners in the ICR to ensure that their pets are vaccinated and to safely confine any aggressive animals or dogs within 15 days.

The DC, in the directives, cautioned that failure to comply with the said directive will result in eviction of the pets.

Pet owners have been asked to ensure that their pets are always on a leash when outside the home and should not be allowed to roam freely in public places.

In case of any symptoms of rabies in pets, owners have been asked to report to the senior municipal veterinary officer, IMC, or any government veterinary officer promptly.The administration has asked the Itanagar Municipal Corporation (IMC) to coordinate with the Arunachal Dog and Cat Rescue NGO, Lekhi, to capture stray dogs. —*PTI*

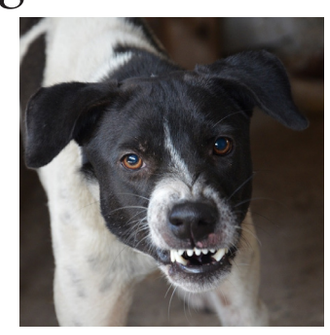


PHOTO: PIXABAY

SILVER JUBILEE GONE WRONG

Manipur school once joyous, now abandoned

IMPHAL/CHURACHANDPUR, 12 MAY

Razed buildings and burnt furniture. These are what remain of the St. Peter's School in Manipur's Imphal after a year of violence in the state between Kuki and Meitei ethnic groups.

"We were preparing to celebrate its silver jubilee year in 2023. But then the clashes broke out. They burnt everything," said principal Khupkhoman, a Kuki who has since moved to Churachandpur from the Meitei-dominated Imphal Valley region.

Now an abandoned structure, the Manipur Board-affiliated St. Peter's School had more than 800 students till Class 10 pre-3 May , 2023, the day reports of incidents of clashes started pouring in from many parts of the north-eastern state, prompting the closure of educational institutions, offices and businesses.

"Its one day at a time for us. The situation remains unpredictable and we don't plan anymore. The crisis continues, and there is nothing to look forward to or look back upon," Khupkhoman, 62, who moved with her family to the hills of Churachandpur, said.

The school, built by Khupkhoman and her late husband over 25 years, also had her residence on its premises. She now lives with her family in a rented accommodation, displaced like more than 60,000 others from both communities.

But Khupkhoman has not stopped calling families livinfg around the school to take updates about her Meitei students, the Kuki's have moved out.

Recalling the preparations for the silver jubilee year celebrations, Khupkhoman said practice for dance and singing performances were underway.

There was a lot of activity but then, within a night, it was all over, she said with tears in her eyes. The institution was attacked in the early hours of 4 May by a mob.

"The school was everything we had, we had built it step by step, it was where we lived for years... Over 800 students had their hopes attached with our vision and within a night everything was gone. At first, I had thought that this will be over in a week's time and I was already making plans about what all needs to be done before we resume classes again," Khupkhoman said.

"Suddenly, I was left jobless, homeless, hopeless...lost everything," she said.

Unsure about the school's future, its management had moved the Supreme Court in November last year, seeking a direction to the Manipur government to compensate for the losses suffered and the state's failure to launch an investigation to arrest the perpetrators. —*PTI*

St Peter's School a year after the attack during ethnic clashes in Manipur PHOTO: PTI

Seven security personnel killed in twin attacks in Pak

PESHAWAR, 12 MAY

At least seven security personnel have been killed and two injured in two separate militant attacks on security forces in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, authorities said on Sunday. Local officials said five security personnel were killed and two injured during the first attack that took place in the Hassan Khel area of North Waziristan district, bordering Afghanistan, in when an improvised explosive device went off targeting a bomb disposal unit on Saturday. Militants opened fire on the forces soon after the blast triggered off, Dawn News quoted the official as saying. In another incident, militants stormed a security post in the Seeman area of the same district, killing two security personnel on Saturday, local authorities said. *—PTI*

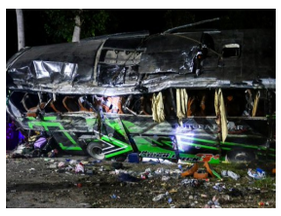


PHOTO: X/@ABC

Students among 11 killed in Indonesian bus crash

BANDUNG, 12 MAY

A bus slammed into cars and motorbikes after its brakes apparently malfunctioned in Indonesia's West Java province, killing at least 11 people, mostly students, and injuring dozens of others, officials said Sunday. The bus carrying 61 students and teachers was returning to a high school in Depok outside Jakarta, the capital, late Saturday from the hilly resort area of Bandung after a graduation celebration, said West Java police spokesperson Jules Abraham Abast. It sped out of control on a downhill road and crossed lanes, hitting several cars and motorbikes before it crashed into an electricity pole, he said. Nine people died at the scene and two others died later in the hospital, including a teacher and a local motorist, Abast said. 53 other people were hospitalised. *—AP*

Wildfire in Canada forces thousands to evacuate

VANCOUVER, 12 MAY

Canadian authorities are urging all remaining residents in a town in British Columbia to leave immediately, despite improving weather conditions, after many were already evacuated due to a fast-growing wildfire. The blaze, which started Friday, almost doubled in size the following day, reaching about 17 square kilometres. BC Wildfire Service maps showed the fire burning just a few kilometres west of Fort Nelson's city limits. Fort Nelson is located in the far northeastern corner of British Columbia, about 1,600 kilometres from Vancouver. Fort Nelson and the Fort Nelson Indian Reserve have a combined population of about 3,000. In 2023, Canada witnessed a record number of wildfires that also caused choking smoke in parts of the USand forced tens of thousands of people to evacuate across British Columbia. *—AP*

Cop killed, over 100 injured in PoK

The protest erupted over high prices of wheat flour and electricity in PoK

ISLAMABAD, 12 MAY

One police officer was killed and more than 100 people, mostly policemen, injured in violent clashes between security forces and protesters agitating against high prices of wheat flour and electricity in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, media reports said on Sunday.

The disputed region witnessed clashes on Saturday between the police and activists of a rights movement amid a wheel-jam and shutter-down strike across the territory, the Dawn newspaper reported.

Mirpur Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Kamran Ali told Dawn.com that sub-inspector Adnan Qureshi succumbed to a gunshot wound in the chest in the town of Islamgarh, where he was deployed along with other police personnel to stop a rally for Muzaffarabad via Kotli and Poonch districts under the banner of the Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC).

The disputed region witnessed clashes on Saturday between the police and activists of a rights movement *PHOTO: X/@IAMSARDARSOHAIB*

JAAC, which has traders at the forefront in most parts of the state, has been seeking the provision of electricity as per hydropower generation cost in the region, subsidised wheat flour and an end to the privileges of the elite class.

Israeli military tanks started to go deeper into the densely populated Jabalia Refugee Camp in northern Gaza. Witnesses on the ground said military tanks were surrounding evacuation centres and residential buildings, as the area sees mass evacuations and displacement to the western part of Gaza City.

On Wednesday and Thursday, around 70 JAAC activists were arrested by police during raids at their residences and those of their relatives in Muzaffarabad and Mirpur divisions, triggering serious clashes in Dadyal on Thursday. The committee had subsequently announced a shutter-down and wheel-jam strike on Friday, a day ahead of its planned long march towards Muzaffarabad Saturday.

Amid a crippling strike on Friday, violent clashes took place between police and protesters in different areas of Muzaffarabad, the capital of PoK. On Saturday, authorities placed mounds of earth on arteries leading to Muzaffarabad, apart from making more arrests, to prevent people from heading towards the state capital.

Witnesses said that Muzaffarabad division and Poonch division observed complete strikes.

The regional government has called for a heavy contingent of policemen to stop the massive protests.

SSP Yasin Baig said at least one police officer and a young boy were injured as police resorted to teargas shelling and aerial firing in some neighbourhoods after stones and bottles were pelted by protesters. Kotli SSP Mir Muhammad Abid said that at least 78 policemen were injured in the district in "attacks of miscreants under the guise of protest".

SSP Abid said some police officials were also reportedly injured in Doliya Jattan. A total of 29 protesters were injured in the clashes, according to Geo News. JAAC spokesperson Hafeez Hamdani said that the action committee had nothing to do with violence. *—PTI*

PAK TELECOM BLOCK 3,500 SIMS OF NON-FILERS

ISLAMABAD, 12 MAY

Pakistan Telecom operators on Saturday blocked mobile phone SIMs of over 3,500 non-filers of the 5000 cards they had promised to the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) they would in line with its Income Tax General Order (ITGO) -- a move aimed at compelling 506,671 individuals to place on record their returns for 2023, The Express Tribune reported.

The FBR also sent messages to about 5,000 individuals, warning them that their mobile phone SIMs would be blocked if they did not file their returns. It has further sought details of the blocked SIMs from the telecom operators. As already notified, the board has sent the second batch of 5,000 non-filers to the telecom companies, which had agreed to initiate the manual blocking process of the SIMs in small batches until their systems were fully equipped to automate it. *—ANI*

835TH HAMBURG PORT BIRTHDAY

Two tugboats set off fireworks during the tugboat ballet at the 835th Hamburg Port Birthday on the river Elbe in the harbour of Hamburg, Germany on Sunday. On 7 May, 1189 Emperor Friedrich Barbarossa granted the Hamburgians the privilege of sailing free of Customs duties along the Lower Elbe as far as the North Sea. Since then Hamburg celebrates the port birthday from 9 May-12 May *PHOTO: PTI*

Hamas regroups elsewhere in ungoverned Gaza

RAFAH, 12 MAY

Israeli forces were battling Palestinian militants across the Gaza Strip on Sunday, including in parts of the devastated north that the military said it had cleared months ago, where Hamas has exploited a security vacuum to regroup.

Israel has portrayed the southern Gaza city of Rafah as Hamas' last stronghold, saying it must invade in order to succeed in its goals of dismantling the group and returning scores of hostages. A limited operation there has expanded in recent days, forcing some 3,00,000 people to flee.

But the rest of the war-ravaged territory seems to provide ample opportunities for Hamas. Israel has yet to offer a detailed plan for postwar governance in Gaza, saying only that it will maintain open-ended security control over the coastal enclave, which is home to some 2.3 million Palestinians. Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has rejected postwar plans proposed by the United States for the Palestinian Authority, which administers parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank, to govern Gaza with support from Arab and Muslim countries.

With the two close allies divided, Gaza has been left without a functioning government, leading to a breakdown in public order and allowing Hamas to reconstitute itself in even the hardest-hit areas. Palestinians reported heavy Israeli bombardment overnight in the urban Jabaliya refugee camp and other areas in the northern Gaza Strip, which has suffered widespread devastation and been largely isolated by Israeli forces for months.

Residents said Israeli warplanes and artillery struck across the camp and the Zeitoun area east of Gaza City, where troops have been battling Palestinian militants for over a week. They have called on tens of thousands of people to relocate to nearby areas.

Five Israeli soldiers were killed in Zeitoun on Friday, and Palestinian militants fired a barrage of 14 rockets toward the Israeli city of Beersheba that night. *—PTI*

Family members and activists carry an empty casket during a mock funeral held in Jerusalem *PHOTO: AP*

PRO-PALESTINIAN PROTESTS HELD IN US COLLEGE

WASHINGTON, 12 MAY

Small pro-Palestinian protests popped up sporadically on Saturday as colleges and universities from North Carolina to California held commencement ceremonies, including dozens of graduating students at Virginia Commonwealth University who walked out on an address by Gov. Glenn Youngkin.

While some of the estimated 100 students and family members who left during the Republican governor's speech showed support for Palestinians, others held signs signalling opposition to Youngkin's policies on education, according to WRIC-TV.

At the University of Wisconsin-Madison, a small group of demonstrators staged what appeared to be a silent protest during commencement at Camp Randall Stadium. A photo posted by the Wisconsin State Journal showed about six people walking through the rear of the stadium, with two carrying a Palestinian flag. *—AP*

UK knife attacks witness 20% jump; stoke public anxiety

LONDON, 12 MAY

A familiar horror reached Pooja Kanda first on social media: There had been a sword attack in London. And then Kanda, who was home alone at the time, saw a detail she dreaded and knew all too well.

A man with a sword had killed a boy, 14, who was walking to school. Two years ago, her 16-year-old son, Ronan, was killed by two sword-wielding schoolmates while walking to a neighbour's to borrow a PlayStation controller.

"It took me back," Kanda, who lives near Birmingham, said about Daniel Anjorin's 30 April killing in an attack in London's Hainault district that also wounded four people. In parts of the world that ban or strictly regulate gun ownership, including Britain and much of the rest of Europe, knives and other types of blades are often the weapons of choice used in crimes.

Although the number of fatal stabbings has mostly held steady in England and Wales over the past 10 years, headline-grabbing attacks and an overall rise in knife crime have stoked anxieties and led to calls for the government to do more.

In London, such crimes jumped 20 per cent. The other two UK countries, Scotland and Northern Ireland, keep their own statistics.

With knives so readily available, there's only so much that can be done.

Of the 244 fatal stabbings in England and Wales in the 12 months ending with March 2023 — the most recent figures available — 101 were committed with kitchen knives, far surpassing any other type of blade, according to the Office of National Statistics.

The Bristol Post published a timeline in March of more than a dozen knife incidents in that coastal city since the start of the year. It included reports on the stabbing deaths of three teenagers over an 18-day period and another teen who was stabbed to death in February. Meanwhile, a teenage girl in Wales was arrested on suspicion of attempted murder after stabbing a student and two teachers at a secondary school 24 April, police said. *—AP*

The 'Everest Man' beats his record, climbs for 29th time

KATHMANDU, 12 MAY

Nepal's legendary mountaineer Kami Rita Sherpa made history on Sunday by breaking his record for the highest number of ascents of Mt Everest as he scaled the world's highest peak for the 29th time. The 54-year-old veteran climber reached the 8,849-metre peak at 7:25 am local time on Sunday, according to Rakesh Gurung, director at the Tourism Department in the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation. The expedition was organised by the Seven Summit Treks and had 20 climbers. They scaled Everest on Sunday morning, said Thani Guragain, a senior staff at the Seven Summit Treks. "At least 20 climbers from Seven Summit Treks including Kami made a successful ascent of Mt. Everest," Seven Summit Treks said. *—PTI*

Kami Rita *PHOTO: PTI*

TURKIYE, GREECE TEST A FRIENDSHIP DEAL

ANKARA, 12 MAY

Old foes Turkiye and Greece will test a five-month-old friendship initiative on Monday when Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis visits Ankara. They're focusing on trade and energy, repairing cultural ties and a long list of other items placed on the so-called positive agenda. Mitsotakis is to meet with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara on Monday. Erdogan visited Athens in early December, and the two countries have since maintained regular high-level contacts to promote a variety of fence-mending initiatives, including educational exchanges and tourism. Turkish citizens this summer are able to visit 10 Greek islands using on-the-spot visas, skipping a more cumbersome procedure needed to enter Europe's common travel area zone. *—AP*

THOUSANDS EVACUATED

Flash floods, lava kill 28 in Indonesia's Sumatra; Brazil and Afg suffer too

PADANG, 12 MAY

Heavy rains and torrents of cold lava and mud flowing down a volcano's slopes on Indonesia's Sumatra island triggered flash floods that killed at least 28 people and injured several others, officials said Sunday.

Monsoon rains and a major mudslide from a cold lava flow on Mount Marapi caused a river to breach its banks and tear through mountainside villages in Agam and Tanah Datar districts in West Sumatra province just before midnight on Saturday.

Cold lava, also known as lahar, is a mixture of volcanic material and pebbles that flow down a volcano's slopes in the rain. By Sunday, rescuers had pulled out 11 bodies in the worst-hit village of Canduang and recovered four other bodies in the neighbouring village of Sungai Pua, Muhari said.

The agency said in a statement that at least seven villagers were injured by the flash floods, and rescuers were searching for other possible victims. It said 60 people had fled to temporary government shelters.

The disaster came just two months after heavy rains triggered flash floods and a landslide in West Sumatra's Pesisir Selatan and Padang Pariaman districts, killing at least 21 people and leaving five others missing.

The 9,465-foot Mount Marapi erupted late last year killing 23 climbers who were caught by a surprise weekend eruption. The volcano indicates above-normal volcanic activity under which climbers and villagers must stay more than three kilometres from the peak, according to Indonesia's Centre for Volcanology and Geological Disaster Mitigation.

Vehicles are partially submerged on a street flooded by heavy rains in Indonesia and Brazil; At least 315 people have died in torrential floods in Afghanistan *PHOTO: PTI/AP/ X@Sprinter00000*

At least 315 killed in Afg floods

The Taliban's ministry for refugees said on Sunday the death toll from flooding in northern Afghanistan was 315, with more than 1,600 people injured.

The toll was announced on Sunday, a day after the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) said over 300 people were killed and many others remained missing, with authorities scrambling to rescue the injured.

—AP

FIRE ENGULFS 1,400 HOUSING OUTLETS IN WARSAW

WARSAW, 12 MAY

A fire broke out on Sunday morning in a vast shopping center housing 1,400 shops and service outlets in the Bialoleka district in Poland's capital. The fire brigade said more than 80 per cent of the Marywilska 44 shopping complex was on fire, and 50 teams, including chemical and environmental rescue specialists, were carrying out rescue operations. A police spokesperson told the news agency PAP there were no injuries reported. Authorities also sent a text message warning Warsaw resident about the fire and telling them to stay home with the windows closed. Footage aired by private broadcaster TVN24 showed thick black smoke rising over the area. Mirbud, an industrial construction company listed on the Warsaw Stock Exchange, owns the shopping center. Shopping centers and large shops are usually closed on Sunday due to a ban on trade imposed by the previous government. *—AP*

FMCG companies expect volume growth in FY25

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

Leading FMCG makers expect a volume-led growth in FY25, with a revival in consumption supported by a lower inflationary environment, projections of a normal monsoon and good rabi crop. Companies such as Britannia, Marico, Dabur, GCPL and HUL in their latest March quarter earnings also expect a revenue growth in the new financial year as the deflationary cycle is over. The companies were forced to slash prices as prices of major commodities had fallen, which had in turn impacted their topline and value growth in the last two quarters of FY24. Besides, they expect a gradual uptick from the rural market, which contributes over one-third FMCG sales in the country. For Dabur "a volume growth will be the way forward" in this fiscal, said its CEO Mohit Malhotra in an investor call.

He remains optimistic of uptick in consumption trends in FY25 and expects a "mid-to-high single digit volume growth". *—PTI*

Maruti expects over 30% jump in CNG vehicle sales

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

Maruti Suzuki India expects its CNG car sales to rise over 30 per cent to around 6 lakh units this fiscal, according to a senior company official. The country's largest carmaker also aims to export around 3 lakh units in the ongoing financial year. "So CNG, this year, we did about 4,50,000 (units) in passenger vehicles. We are hoping to do something like 6,00,000 vehicles in FY24-25," Maruti Suzuki India Executive Director Corporate Affairs Rahul Bharti said in an analyst call. The company sells CNG trims across various models like WagonR, Brezza, Dzire, and Ertiga, among others in the domestic market. Bharti said the company's capacity expansion by around 1 lakh units per annum at its Manesar plant, Haryana largely addresses the Ertiga supply issues. Ertiga CNG demand is huge in the market leading to supply issues. On overseas shipments, Bharti said the company aims to export about 3 lakh units. *—PTI*

Anarock revenue may rise 30% to ₹575cr in FY24

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

Property consultant Anarock is expecting a 30 per cent growth in its revenue this fiscal year to around Rs 575 crore mainly driven by strong housing sales, its Chairman Anuj Puri said. Anarock, one of the leading real estate consultancy firms in India, was established by Puri in April 2017. "Our revenue will easily cross Rs 550 crore this financial year and may touch Rs 575 crore," Puri told. Out of the total estimated revenue in 2023-24 fiscal, he said around Rs 400 crore will come from sales of residential properties on behalf of builders. Puri said residential sales in primary market (first sale) touched an all-time high in 2023 calendar year. *—PTI*

E-tailing sector projected to grow at 18% by 2028-29

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

The e-tail sector in India which is expected to be nearly USD 60 billion in the financial year 2023-24, is projected to grow at a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 18 per cent by 2028-29, according to a report by Knight Frank India, a property consultancy firm. Electronic retailing (E-tailing) is the sale of goods and services through the Internet. At the current levels of consumption across all retail categories, the revenue potential of all shopping centres across Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities is expected to grow at a CAGR of 23 per cent during the same period, it said in a report, titled 'Think India Think Retail 2024'. The Indian retail industry is rapidly growing and accounts for 10 per cent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and 8 per cent of the workforce. The sector is witnessing growth with the development of shopping centres. *—PTI*

China largest trading partner of India with $118 B

India's exports to China rises by 8.7% to $16.67 B in the last fiscal

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

China has emerged as the largest trading partner of India with USD 118.4 billion two-way commerce in 2023-24, slightly edging past the US, according to the data of economic think tank GTRI.

The bilateral trade between India and the US stood at USD 118.3 billion in 2023-24. Washington was the top trading partner of New Delhi during 2021-22 and 2022-23.

The data showed that India's exports to China rose by 8.7 per cent to USD 16.67 billion in the last fiscal. The main sectors which recorded healthy growth in exports to that country include iron ore, cotton yarn, fabrics, madeups, handloom, spices, fruits and vegetables, plastic and linoleum.

Imports from China, increased by 3.24 per cent to USD 101.7 billion.

On the other hand, exports to the US dipped by 1.32 per cent to USD 77.5 billion in 2023-24 as against USD 78.54 billion in 2022-23, while imports dipped by about 20 per cent to USD 40.8 billion, the data showed.

The Global Trade Research Initiative said that from fiscal year 2019 to FY2024, India's trade dynamics with its top 15 trading partners underwent significant transformations, impacting both exports and imports along with the status of trade surplus or deficit across various sectors.

The main sectors which recorded healthy growth in exports to China include iron ore, cotton yarn, fabrics, madeups and spices *PHOTO: PTI*

It added that China witnessed a marginal decline in exports by 0.6 per cent, from USD 16.75 billion to USD 16.66 billion, while imports from China surged by 44.7 per cent, from USD 70.32 billion to USD 101.75 billion.

"This growth in imports led to an expanding trade deficit, rising from USD 53.57 billion in FY2019 to USD 85.09 billion in FY2024, highlighting concerns over stagnant exports amidst rising imports," GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said.

Conversely, it said, trade with the US showed growth, with exports increasing significantly by 47.9 per cent from USD 52.41 billion to USD 77.52 billion.

- Imports from the US also grew by 14.7 per cent, from USD 35.55 billion to USD 40.78 billion. This resulted in an expanded trade surplus for India, which grew from USD 16.86 billion to USD 36.74 billion

Imports from the US also grew by 14.7 per cent, from USD 35.55 billion to USD 40.78 billion. This resulted in an expanded trade surplus for India, which grew from USD 16.86 billion to USD 36.74 billion.

According to the commerce ministry data, China was India's top trading partner from 2013-14 till 2017-18 and also in 2020-21. Before China, the UAE was the country's largest trading partner. The US was the largest partner in 2021-22 and 2022-23.

In 2023-24, the UAE with USD 83.6 billion, was the third largest trading partner of India. It was followed by Russia, Saudi Arabia , and Singapore. *—PTI*

IN APRIL FY25

Large PSUs' cap expenditure reaches ₹50K cr

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

Large public sector companies have spent a little over Rs 50,200 crore towards capital expenditure in April FY25 alone, which is 6.46 per cent of their full fiscal target of Rs 7.77 lakh crore, an official said. The pace albeit is slower than Rs 54,177 crore capex spent in April FY24, about 7.3 per cent of the full year budget target of Rs 7.42 lakh crore.

"The capex spending will pick up going forward. Also, the numbers for April are still provisional and will go up in the revised final numbers," the official told PTI.

The capital expenditure during the first month of 2024-25 fiscal was driven by railways, road, and oil and gas sectors.

The Indian Railways and sector PSUs spent Rs 26,641 crore in April, followed by National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) at Rs 6,645 crore.

Among oil and gas sector PSUs, ONGC incurred capex of Rs 2,318 crore, Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) Rs 2,423 crore in the first month of the current financial year.

Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd and Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd spent Rs 1,155 crore and Rs 417 crore, respectively in April. Power sector PSU NTPC spent Rs 2,083 crore. The finance ministry tracks capital expenditure of public sector undertakings (PSUs) that have an annual investment target of over Rs 100 crore.

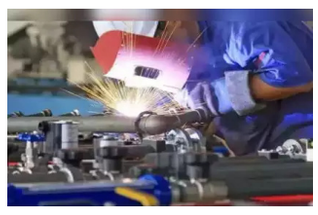


PHOTO: PTI

The Interim Budget for 2024-25 set a cumulative capital expenditure target of Rs 9.01 lakh crore for all public sector undertakings. Of this, Rs 7.77 lakh crore worth capex is to be spent by PSUs with over Rs 100 crore of annual capital expenditure target.

In 2023-24, large PSUs spent Rs 8.05 lakh crore towards capex, exceeding the budget target of Rs 7.42 lakh crore. *—PTI*

FPIs withdraw ₹17,000cr from equities in May

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

Foreign investors pulled out a massive Rs 17,000 crore from Indian equities in the first 10 days of the month owing to general election and the uncertainty surrounding its outcome coupled with expensive valuations and profit booking. This was way higher than a net withdrawal of Rs 8,700 crore in the entire April on concerns over a tweak in India's tax treaty with Mauritius and a sustained rise in US bond yields.

Before that, FPIs made a net investment of Rs 35,098 crore in March and Rs 1,539 crore in February. Looking ahead, post-general elections, corporate India's strong financial performance in Q4 FY24 is anticipated to be rewarded. While FPIs may adopt a cautious stance until the election results are clear, favourable outcomes and established political stability could see their return in significant numbers, Trivesh D, COO at Tradejini, said.

According to the data with the depositories, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) experienced a net outflow of Rs 17,083 crore in equities this month (till May 10). There are multiple reasons behind this aggressive selling by FPIs. With the ongoing general election and the uncertainty surrounding its outcome, investors are wary to enter the markets before the election results, Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director – Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, said.Many investors would have found this as an opportunity to book profit and wait until more clarity emerges on the country's political landscape, he added. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

CRISIS RESOLVED

AI Express slowly restoring flights; cabin crew joins duty

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

Air India Express is slowly restoring its flights and stabilising the network, an official said on Sunday while the cabin crew union emphasised that all members who had reported sick have joined duty. The Tata Group-owned airline, which operates around 380 services daily, has cancelled at least more than 20 flights on Sunday, the official in the know said and added that full normalcy is expected by Tuesday morning.

The strike by a section of cabin crew to protest against the alleged mismanagement at the airline had forced cancellation of hundreds of flights since Tuesday night.

On Thursday, the strike was called off and the carrier also withdrew termination letters issued to 25 cabin crew following a conciliation meeting convened by the chief labour commissioner in the national capital.

The meeting was attended by representatives of the airline and the Air India Express Employees Union (AIXEU).

In a release on Sunday, the union said all the cabin crew who had reported sick have joined back and "as such there is no delay on the part of the cabin crew". "All the cabin crew members who reported sick have joined their duty by 11 May, 2024," it said. However, due to a glitch in the company's scheduling software as it was recently introduced, it is still showing that staff is reported sick.

The official said flights are being slowly restored and stabilisation of the network is expected by Tuesday morning. *—PTI*

Stabilisation of the network is expected by Tuesday morning *PHOTO: PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

INDIA'S COAL IMPORT RISES 8% TO 268 MT IN FY24

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

India's coal import rose by 7.7 per cent to 268.24 million tonne (MT) in FY24 driven by softness in seaborne prices and likelihood of increase in power demand during summer.

The country's coal import was 249.06 MT in FY23, according to data compiled by B2B e-commerce company mjunction services.

Coal import in March FY24 also rose to 23.96 MT, over 21.12 MT in the corresponding month of the previous fiscal. Of the total volume recorded in March 2024, non-coking coal import stood at 15.33 MT, against 13.88 MT in March FY23. Coking coal import in March 2024 was 5.34 MT against 3.96 MT a year ago.

During FY24, non-coking coal import was at 175.96 MT, higher than 162.46 MT imported during FY23. Coking coal import was at 57.22 MT in 2023-24, against 54.46 MT in 2022-23.

"There was an increase in coal import volumes due to the continued softness in seaborne prices and expectation of a demand uptick during the summer season. However, as there is ample availability of domestic coal in the market, it is to be seen if import demand remains strong in coming months," mjunction MD & CEO Vinaya Varma said.PTI

The all-India production of coal during 2023-24 was at 997.25 MT, registering a growth of 11.65 per cent over FY23. *—PTI*

Infra evaluation for $1T exports by Aug-Sept

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

A study to assess required infrastructure and identify main industry clusters for achieving the USD 1 trillion merchandise exports target by 2030 may be submitted by August-September to the commerce ministry, an official said.

The official said that the Asian Development Bank (ADB) is doing that study for the ministry.In 2023-24, India's merchandise exports dipped by over 3 per cent to USD 437 billion. Imports during the last fiscal dipped by 5.7 per cent to USD 675.4 billion.

By 2030, the ministry is aiming to more than double the country's outbound shipments of goods.

PHOTO: PTI

Explaining the rationale behind the exercise, the official said that to take the exports to USD 1 trillion, there will be an import of about USD 1.5 trillion, so to handle USD 2.5 trillion worth of trade "we need" additional infrastructure and logistics capacity at roads, ports, airports and railways.

Besides infrastructure requirements, there is also a need to identify the industry clusters from where there will be a large movement of goods.

To query when the ministry is expected to get the report, the official said "by around August-September".

After that, the commerce ministry will share the details with ministries concerned, including shipping, aviation, roads and national highways, and railways.The ministries would see if they need investments for additional capacity development and where all that investment will go.

Another official said that India may need to create an infrastructure which will support an additional 2,000 million tonne of goods movement in the ports. *—PTI*

Gold ETFs see first outflow after March 2023 at ₹396cr

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

Gold Exchange Traded Fund (ETF) witnesses a net outflow of Rs 396 crore last month, making it the first withdrawal after March 2023, owing to profit booking.

Despite the decline, the asset under management (AUM) of gold funds rose 5 per cent to Rs 32,789 crore at April-end from Rs 31,224 crore in the preceding month, according to the data with the Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi).

As per the data, Gold ETFs saw a net withdrawal of Rs 396 crore in April as compared to an inflow of Rs 373 crore in the preceding month.

The last time this asset class witnessed net outflow was in March 2023, withdrawing Rs 266 crore. Recently gold prices in US dollar terms as well as INR terms have scaled new highs. With ongoing geopolitical tensions, the appeal of gold as a safe haven and hedge against inflation is expected to continue, he added. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Auditor of Zomato subsidiaries resigns

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

Zomato on Sunday said the auditor of its subsidiaries Zomato Hyperpure and Blink Commerce has resigned with immediate effect, paving the way for the food tech platform's auditor Deloitte Haskins & Sells to be appointed in its place to make the audit process more efficient.

Batliboi & Associates, who was appointed as statutory auditors of the two wholly-owned subsidiaries for five years beginning 1 April, 2023, till the conclusion of the 13th AGM, resigned w.e.f. 12 May, 2024, Zomato said in a regulatory filing".

Further to our various discussions and email dated 8 May, 2024, from the Global Controller Finance, Zomato Limited, we understand that the holding company's management wants to align the statutory auditor of the company with the auditors of the holding company responsible for the audit of consol accounts to avoid some duplication and bring some efficiencies in the audit process at group level," Batliboi & Associates stated.

Zomato informed that the reason for resignation is to allow for the appointment of the current statutory auditor of the company, Deloitte Haskins & Sells LLP, as the statutory auditor of Zomato Hyperpure Private Limited (ZHPL) and Blink Commerce Private Limited (BCPL) *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

THE TRANSITION

Consumers' choice sees a shift to luxury items

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

Indian consumers are transitioning from unbranded products to luxury items, as per a report titled '20 things about Indian consumers' by IndiaQuotient.

The report highlights a noticeable change in purchasing patterns, with consumers increasingly favoring branded luxury goods, indicating a growing market for luxury products in India.

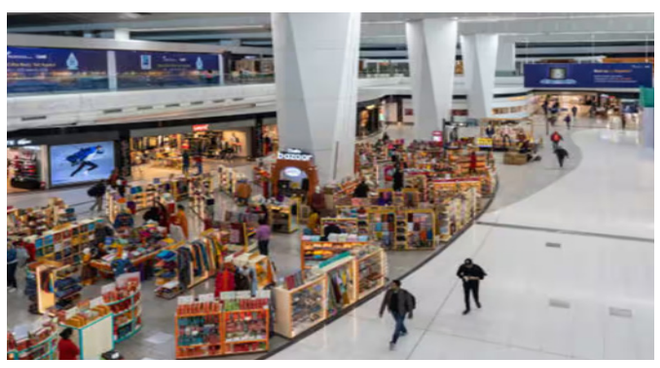
According to the report, tech giant Apple dominates the market with a commanding 67 per cent share of premium smartphones priced above USD 800, followed by Samsung with a 31 per cent share. This data highlights the rising demand for high-end smartphone brands among Indian consumers.

Recently Tim Cook, CEO, Apple lauded Apple India's double-digit revenue growth, marking a new March quarter record. He described India as an "incredibly exciting market" and a major focus for the company.

Additionally, there has been a significant uptick in the prevalence of sunroof-equipped cars in India. In 2023, 25 percent of all cars sold have featured sunroofs, a notable increase from the 7 per cent recorded in 2018. This surge in demand for sunroof cars suggests a growing preference for luxury features among Indian consumers, despite their limited usability in India's hot climate. Consumers are willing to pay between Rs 50,000 to 60,000 for sunroof-equipped cars, indicating their increasing inclination towards luxury.

The report also points out a shift in purchasing behavior among the lower middle class. Driven by the rise of digitalisation in the country, the younger family members are assuming the role of "Chief Technology Officers", leading to a trend of digitizing and branding family purchases.

In the automotive sector, the premium motorbike segment in India witnessed a notable 32 per cent revenue growth in FY23, outpacing the overall motorbike market's growth of 14 per cent. Sales of premium electric two-wheelers tripled in FY23. *—ANI*



Apple dominates the market with a commanding 67 per cent share of premium smartphones *PHOTO: PTI*

Simarjeet, Gaikwad shine as CSK beat RR

CSK brighten their IPL playoffs qualification

CHENNAI, 12 MAY

Chennai Super Kings on Sunday clinched a five-wicket win over Rajasthan Royals in a low-scoring thriller to brighten their IPL playoffs qualification chances here on Sunday. Chasing a modest 142 on a tricky surface, CSK made 145 for five in 18.2 overs with skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad dropping the anchor to make a well-compiled unbeaten 42 (41 balls, 1x4s, 2x6s).

Rookie Sameer Rizvi hit an eight-ball 15 not out with three fours to end the game in a jiffy after Ravindra Jadeja became the third batter in IPL history to be adjudged out after obstructing the field.

Earlier in the first innings, Chennai Super Kings bowler led by seamer Simarjeet Singh produced a unified show to restrict Rajasthan Royals to a moderate 141 for five.

Tushar Deshpande took 2/30 while the others produced disciplined spells.

Ruturaj Gaikwad 42 not out **PHOTO: PTI**

For RR, Riyan Parag top scored with 47 not out off 35 balls with three sixes and one four.

Brief scores: Rajasthan Royals 141/5 in 20 overs (Yashasvi Jaiswal 24, Riyan Parag 47 not out, Tushar Deshpande 2/30, Simarjeet Singh 3/26) lost to Chennai Super Kings 145/5 in 18.2 overs (Rachin Ravindra 27, Ruturaj Gaikwad 42 not out; Ravichandran Ashwin 2/35, Nandre Burger 1/21, Yuzvendra Chahal 1/22) by 5 wickets. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Pranavi finishes tied 7th with a strong finish

SEOUL, 12 MAY

Pranavi Urs produced a strong finish with three birdies in a four-hole stretch on the back nine for a top-10 finish at the Aramco Team Series Korea.Pranavi shot rounds of 69-77-69 for a 1-under 215 and was tied for seventh at the end of the competition.This was the second top-10 finish in six starts this season for the Mysuru girl, who has been an 'Order of Merit' winner in the Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour, before earning a status on the Ladies European Tour.The other two Indians, the Olympic-bound Diksha Dagar (79-72-71) shot 6-over to finish tied 37th while Vani Kapoor (77-74-77) had a below-par 12-over and tied 60th rank.Korea's Hyo-Joo Kim lived up to her billing as the home favorite to win by three shots in Seoul.Leading by two shots heading into the final round—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Ramandeep Singh fined 20% of his match fee

KOLKATA, 12 MAY

Kolkata Knight Riders medium pacer Ramandeep Singh has been fined 20 percent of his match fees for breaching the IPL Code of Conduct during their match against Mumbai Indians at the Eden Gardens here. The 27-year-old committed a Level 1 offence under Article 2.20 of the IPL Code of Conduct. He admitted to the offense and accepted the Match Referee's sanction. For Level 1 breaches of the Code of Conduct, the Match Referee's decision is final and binding.—*PTI*

Zimbabwe win the final T20 by eight wickets

DHAKA, 12 MAY

Zimbabwe avoided a series clean sweep by beating Bangladesh by eight wickets in the fifth and final Twenty20 match on Sunday. After being put into bat, Bangladesh made 157-6 but Brian Bennett's 70 off 49 balls, with five fours and as many sixes, set the platform for Zimbabwe's victory with nine balls to spare. Skipper Sikandar Raza finished with 72 off 46 balls and combined with Bennett for a 75-run stand for the second wicket after Shakib Al Hasan struck early to dismiss Tadiwanashe Marumani for 1.—*PTI*

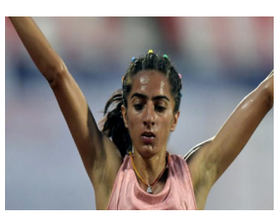


PHOTO: AFP

Deeksha sets new Indian record in athletics meet

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

Indian track athlete K M Deeksha set a new national record in the women's 1500m while Avinash Sable finished second in the men's 5000m event at the Sound Running Track Fest in Los Angeles. The 25-year-old Deeksha finished third in the final on Saturday after running the distance in 4:04.78, bettering the previous record of 4:05.39 set by Harmilan Bains in 2021 at the National Open Athletics Championships in Warangal.—*PTI*

GT faces formidable KKR in must-win game

AHMEDABAD, 12 MAY

Shubman Gill's return to form will provide a big boost to Gujarat Titans as they square off against table-toppers Kolkata Knight Riders in their must-win IPL game here on Monday.

Gill roared back into form with his fourth IPL hundred to keep GT's slim playoff hopes alive with a comfortable win against Chennai Super Kings at home in their last outing.

Gill and Sai Sudharsan's twin centuries were the cornerstone of the hosts' huge total and their role will be crucial once again as they face KKR, which has become the first team to qualify for the playoffs.

As many as seven teams are still in the race for the playoffs. While Rajasthan Royals (16) and Sunrisers Hyderabad (14) are well-placed at second and third position, three teams -- CSK, Delhi Capitals, and Lucknow Super Giants -- are at 12 points each.

GT and Royal Challengers Bengaluru are at 10 points and can reach a maximum of 14 points. With a negative net run rate, GT's chances are the lowest and it will take a miracle for the former champions to sneak into the top four.

Shubman Gill and Shreyas Iyer **PHOTO: AFP**

However, one thing is clear, GT will once again have to play out of their skin and register big wins to keep their mathematical chances alive.

GT's bowling has lacked teeth this season with the pacers inconsistent and spinners leaking runs. But the bowlers did manage to snap three CSK wickets in the first three overs in their last outing.

Mohit Sharma's variations and knuckle balls were effective and Rashid Khan's guile also stood out and they would hope for another good outing.

But it will again boil down to the top-order batting, which has failed to fire in the last few games before Gill and Sudharsan came up with sensational tons en route to a record 210 opening stand. —*PTI*

TODAY'S MATCH

GUJARAT TITANS vs KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS

Time: 7:30 PM

Where To Watch:

Jio Cinema, Star Sports Network

Stadium: Narendra Modi Stadium, Ahmedabad

SUPERBET CHESS

Praggnanandhaa beats Magnus Carlsen but remains third

WARSAW, 12 MAY

India's R. Praggnanandhaa scored yet another victory over world number one Magnus Carlsen of Norway to keep himself afloat even as Wei Yi of China stretched his lead to a massive 2.5 points in the Superbet rapid and blitz chess tournament, a part of the Grand Chess Tour.

With nine rounds still to come in the blitz event, Wei Yi has amassed 20.5 points with seven wins on the first day of the blitz. Ending the day with 7.5 out of a possible nine, Yi seems like a man possessed and unless a hurricane hits him, is poised to win the first leg of the Grand Chess Tour.

Carlsen, on 18, is a distant second at this point and the main reason behind that is Praggnanandhaa, who has been beating the world number one often these days in the faster version of the game.

Praggnanandhaa, however, is far behind the leaders with 14.5 points which makes it a two-horse race for the title.

Magnus Carlsen and R. Praggnanandhaa **PHOTO: PTI**

In the fourth spot is Arjun Erigaisi with 14 points while Duda Jan-Krzysztof of Poland is right behind him on 13. Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan stands sixth on 12.5, a full point clear of Vincent Keymer of Germany, and the eighth spot is now taken by early leader Kirill Shevchenko of Romania with 11 points.

Anish Giri of Holland improved a little to be ninth on 10.5 while the blitz remained a cause for worry for world championship challenger D. Gukesh who is languishing at the last spot with 9.5 points in the USD 1,75,000 prize money tournament.

Carlsen notably mentioned that his nervous system had collapsed following his second-round loss against Praggnanandhaa. The world number one ended with six points out of nine, which is by all standards a decent result but following his loss to the Indian he blundered again and went down to Abdusattorov from a winning position.

Wei Yi started the day with a loss against Gukesh but recovered in quick time to only concede a draw to Carlsen while winning the rest of the seven games.

For Gukesh, it was a tough day despite a great start against the tournament leader as the Indian could only score 2.5 points in all. —*PTI*

WE ARE WORKING TO BE BEST FOR PARIS: HARMANPREET

BENGALURU, 12 MAY

The Indian men's hockey team has identified areas that "needed attention" following its whitewash by Australia in the five-Test series and is ready for the tough European leg of the Pro League, said skipper Harmanpreet Singh on Sunday.

Last month, India, the Tokyo Olympics bronze medallists, lost all their matches to the Kookaburras, raising doubts about their preparations for the Paris Games later this year. But drag-flicker Harmanpreet said the squad has done a lot of high-intensity training and the confidence in the side continues to grow.

"We are in the last stages of an intense training block right now. The team has worked on the areas we felt needed attention after the tour of Australia," said Harmanpreet in a Hockey India release.

"Soon, we will head to Europe to play some essential matches in the Pro League 2023/24 to test ourselves against some tough opponents like Argentina, Belgium, Germany, and Great Britain.

Harmanpreet Singh **PHOTO: PTI**

"The chemistry in the squad continues to grow and with only 75 days left for the Paris Olympics we are working to be in the best shape possible," he added. India will begin their Olympic campaign against New Zealand on July 27. The other teams in Pool B are Belgium, Australia, Argentina, and Ireland. —*PTI*

PATIDAR FIFTY GUIDES RCB TO 187 FOR 9 AGAINST DC

BENGALURU, 12 MAY

Royal Challengers Bengaluru could not exploit Rajat Patidar's blazing fifty to the optimum, settling for a tad underwhelming 187 for nine against Delhi Capitals in their Indian Premier League match here on Sunday. Patidar (52, 32b, 3x4, 3x6) and Will Jacks (41, 29b, 3x4, 2x6) added 88 runs off 53 balls during a breezy third-wicket stand as RCB overcame the early dismissals of skipper Faf du Plessis and Virat Kohli to have a strong middle passage.Du Plessis' slice-off pacer Mukesh Kumar was gobbled up by Jack Fraser-McGurk near third man.Kohli gave signals of another T20 masterclass while creaming 27 off 13 balls, including two sixes off Ishant. —*PTI*

Patidar **PHOTO: PTI**

Winner Esha Singh (M-1st) flanked by Manu Bhaker (R-2nd) and Rhythm Sangwan (3rd) at the 25m rapid-fire pistol women's event **PHOTO: AFP**

Esha, Anish register 2nd win in Olympic Selection

NEW DELHI, 12 MAY

Esha Singh and Anish Bhanwala registered their second Olympic Selection Trial wins in the women's 25m pistol and men's 25m rapid-fire pistol (RFP) respectively here on Sunday.

While Anish had won the first trial in the same event in Delhi, Esha had claimed the second trial in the women's 10m air pistol, also at the Karni Singh range in Delhi.

At the M.P. State Shooting Academy (MPSSA) ranges, Esha notched her first win in the women's 25m pistol trial, shooting 43 in the finals. Her score was a point more than the world record set by Korean Kim Yeji at the Baku World Cup earlier this month.

Manu Bhaker came second with 40 hits while Rhythm Sangwan picked up the final podium place, bowing out ahead of the 10th and final series with a score of 33. Simranpreet Kaur Brar and Abhidnya Patil were fourth and fifth respectively.

In the men's RFP final, Anish seemed to be in a league of his own, bossing the five-man finals field with three perfect series of five hits in the beginning. He missed just four to finish with 36 hits for the win.

Vijayveer Sidhu did stutter in the beginning, but eventually, held his own to come in second with 31 hits. Ankur Goel was third with 19, while Adarsh Singh and Bhavesh Shekhawat came fourth and fifth respectively. —*PTI*

AMAN ONLY MALE INDIAN WRESTLER TO WIN A QUOTA FOR PG

ISTANBUL, 12 MAY

Sujeet Kalkal and Jaideep Ahlawat resisted their respective rivals well at the World Qualifiers on Sunday but could not add more quotas to India's kitty for the Paris Olympic Games, where the country will have only one male wrestler Aman presenting his challenge. In his crucial 65kg bronze medal contest, Sujeet matched USA's Zain Allen Retherford in terms of skills but conceded a takedown on the counter-attack to lose 2-2 on criteria.

It was Sujeet who got on board first with a tremendous counter-attack move. He was about to concede points on a takedown but surprised the American with his quick counter and led the bout for a considerable period. —*PTI*

Aman Sehrawat **PHOTO: PTI**

MESSI PLAYS THROUGH A SCARE

Miami rallies past Montreal 3-2 for a fifth straight win

MONTREAL, 12 MAY

Lionel Messi played the entire game despite a first-half injury scare, Benjamin Cremaschi broke a tie in the 59th minute and Inter Miami overcame an early two-goal deficit to beat Montreal 3-2 on Saturday night for its fifth consecutive Major League Soccer victory.

Luis Suarez got his 11th goal of the season for Inter Miami, and Matías Rojas scored off a free kick. Jules-Anthony Vilsaint and Bryce Duke scored for Montreal (3-5-3).

Inter Miami (8-2-3) extended its unbeaten streak to seven matches (5-0-2) despite Messi being held without a goal or an assist for the first time in his nine MLS appearances this season. Inter Miami is 7-0-2 in those nine games; one of its losses came against Montreal in March, a game where Messi didn't play.

Playing in Canada for the first time, Messi briefly left late in the first half after some sort of issue with his left knee after being fouled by defender George Campbell. The eight-time Ballon d'Or winner as the world's best player went down immediately, holding his knee and writhing in pain.

Inter Miami's medical staff went onto the field to treat Messi, who got up after about two minutes and walked to the Miami sideline. He was not subbed out, which allowed him a chance to return moments later.

And for whatever reason, the match changed in that moment.

Inter Miami was down 2-0 when Messi got hurt; it was 2-1 when he returned and tied moments after he got back onto the field. Rojas scored off a free kick one that Messi would have ordinarily taken to get Inter Miami on the board, and Suarez tapped in a goal off a corner kick late in first-half stoppage time.

Inter Miami's Lionel Messi (10) pushes forward as CF Montreal's Fernando Alvarez (4) and Samuel Piette (6) defend during the first half of an MLS soccer match on Saturday **PHOTO: AFP**

Suarez became the third player in MLS history to score 11 goals in his first 800 minutes of a season, joining Mamadou Diallo (11 in 2000) and Ola Kamara (11 in 2021).

The go-ahead goal came when Rojas sent a ball into open space and Cremaschi ran it down then made a second effort to nudge the ball just clear of two defenders and into the net for a 3-2 lead. Messi had two chances in the final minutes to extend the lead, both narrowly missing. —*AP*

- Lionel Messi played the entire game despite a first-half injury scare, Benjamin Cremaschi broke a tie in the 59th minute and Inter Miami overcame an early two-goal deficit to beat Montreal 3-2 on Saturday night for its fifth consecutive Major League Soccer victory